A CATHOLIC-SHI^{C}A DIALOGUE:

Ethics in Today's Society

edited by
Anthony O'Mahony,
Timothy Wright
and
Mohammad Ali Shomali

A Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue: Ethics in Today's Society is the third volume to appear from the proceedings of the Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue initiative which is supported by the following academic and religious institutions: The Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue, based at the Jesuit Theological Faculty in Heythrop College, University of London, the Benedictine Ampleforth Abbey and College, and the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute Qum, Iran. The Catholic-Shi'a initiative is an international group of Catholic and Shi'a scholars and religious leaders who seek to sustain and develop a dialogue and conversation between Christianity and Islam from their distinctive religious traditions. The initative seeks to engage with the highest level of intellectual and religious discourse on matters of contemporary significance and importance for the global society whilst maintaining the theological integrity of these two respective traditions. The Third Catholic-Shi'a meeting took place at Heythrop College and the Worth Benedictine monastery in 2007.

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INTRODUCTION
Catholic-Shi'a Conference: Ethics in Today's Society

In a society which spends much time debating and measuring success it is clear that when looking at events one sign of possible success must be the clamour for more. If that is the case, then this book is a sign of success. For it brings together not only the papers but also other subsequent reflections all stemming from the third Catholic-Shi'a Conference held in England since 2002, attracting Christian and Shi'a religious leaders and scholars from the United Kingdom, Europe, North America and Iran.

The 2007 Catholic-Shi'a Conference was hosted for the first time by the Benedictine community at Worth Abbey, thereby widening the Benedictine link that had been present from the outset between Ampleforth Abbey, the Heythrop Centre for Christianity and Inter-religious Dialogue, Heythrop College (a Jesuit foundation established in 1614), University of London, the Islamic Centre of England and the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran. We are grateful to all those who made the participants so welcome at Worth Abbey, to all those who prepared these papers and gave permission for publication and to all those who attended the Conference at Heythrop College and Worth Abbey.

Of course, while the fact that the meetings have continued is itself a positive sign, it is equally important the dialogue develops, that relationships deepen and participants feel more and more that what takes place is a dialogue that grapples with the difficult issues of the day. It is evident that over the years participants have delved deeper and deeper into difficult issues. The first Catholic-Shi'a Conference took place in 2003 and opened up a general dialogue between the two great faiths: *A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Sharing our spiritual and cultural resources in the face of contemporary challenges*. In 2005, the focus shifted to two particular elements—faith and reason—to examine how these two major religious traditions and cultures resource faith-reason. And in 2007 the conference focused on 'Ethics in Today's Society', with speakers from Catholic and

Shi'a traditions examining how these two major religious traditions respond to some major ethical issues. Once again, a word of gratitude must be expressed to all the participants for their willingness to share their faith, their views, their opinions so openly. On such openness is true dialogue based.

Ethics is an important and pressing issue and it was chosen for precisely that reason. Furthermore, it was also decided to move on from the general overviews to three precise areas which are often at the forefront of discussions in a wide variety of fora today: environmental ethics, business ethics, and bio-ethics. This structure of moving from the general to the particular ensures that the topics and subsequent discussions do not remain in the realm of abstract discussion, but touch upon issues that affect the daily lives of believers and non-believers alike.

The path of dialogue, however, is never easy. The last volume of conference papers—*A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice*—contained an interesting reflection 'John Paul II, Islam and the Christian-Muslim Encounter' written by Andrew Unsworth and an appreciation of all that Pope John Paul II had done for interreligious dialogue by Abbot Timothy Wright. For this volume Unsworth and Barbara Wood have penned a timely reflection on Pope Benedict XVI and Islam, while Martin Ganeri looks at the whole Catholic theological approach to other faiths.

From the start of this Catholic-Shi'a dialogue fundamental importance has been attached to the key role of prayer. Participants have come together not just to talk about and reflect on learned topics, but have come together in a spirit of prayer. To date, the residential aspects of these conferences have been held in the Benedictine abbeys of Ampleforth and Worth, places steeped in the richness of monastic prayer. One of the practical but wonderful challenges of this dialogue for Christian hosts has been to find appropriate places of prayer for Shi'a friends—and how thought-provoking it has been for Christian hosts to hear what is often their first question on arrival: 'Where shall we pray?' And so the dialogue, the sharing, is not just about theological issues, but also about prayer. The papers contained in this volume on spiritual direction, from a monk from Worth and a scholar from Iran, are not examining something which is an add-on to the dialogue: they are looking at what must be at the foundation of dialogue—prayer and spirituality.

Looking back over the developments since 2002, not only have the meetings continued, the discussions been increasingly richer and

more fruitful, but also the variety of participants increased. From both the Christian and Shi'a worlds more and more people are hearing and reading about the dialogue and expressing a desire to participate. This positive note, however, is also tinged with a note of sadness. October 2007 saw the death of Avril Mary Makhlouf, The Institute of Christian Oriental Research at The Catholic University of America, who was a regular attendee from the start of this Catholic-Shi'a venture. How poignant now to re-read the words she had written after the first Conference at Ampleforth Abbey in July 2003:

> '... it was my sense that each participant left with the intention of pursuing some personal and communal activities related to the insights that he or she had gained at Ampleforth Abbey. My own immediate response was to set myself a program of serious reading on modern Iran and Iranians in order to add to my existing knowledge of Islam in its Arab setting.
>
> At this time of appalling suffering and of conflicts made worse by the media's dissemination of inaccurate information about those who come from different religious traditions, yet are our fellow human beings, this deeply spiritual event should be hailed by all as a well-spring of peace and understanding and a source of strength for everyone intent upon the Creator's will for happiness and harmony of the human race.'[1]

With Avril's endorsement ringing in our ears, it is imperative that the dialogue continue.

Fianlly, we would sincerely like to thank Liam Kelly of Ampleforth Abbey and our publisher Leonard Harrow of Melisende for their significant help and comradeship in making the Catholic Shi'a initiative such a success and for great support they have given to this publication and the previous two volumes associated with the Catholic-Shi'a dialogue.

Anthony O'Mahony, Mohammad Ali Shomali and Timothy Wright
London, Qom and Rome, March 2008

1 First published in the *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 2, Autumn/Winter 2003, 137-142.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: FOUNDATIONS, POLICIES AND FORMS

Mohammad Ali Shomali

What do we mean by dialogue?

Dialogue is a dual way of communication, i.e. there is no fixed speaker or listener. Each party is to be involved and plays a part as the other. Sometimes dialogue starts with careful planning of religious establishments or institutions, but in many cases dialogue may start just with the initiative of one person who decides to be open to another person of a different religious tradition.

Dialogue is a mutual or collective effort to overcome historical prejudices that prevent objective understanding between each other, to know each other and to build upon commonalities. According to what Imam 'Ali, the first Imam of the Shi'a Muslims and the fourth Caliph of all Muslims, has said, 'People are enemies of what they do not know.'

Dialogue is different from debate. Debate is oppositional: two or more sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong. Dialogue is collaborative: two or more parties work together towards a common understanding. Unlike debate, in dialogue one tries to find out strengths in the other position. People involved in debate normally look for conclusions, but dialogue by itself is a means and an aim and may remain open-ended.

Why dialogue?

Islam, like other Abrahamic faiths, believes in the unity of God. God is one; He has no partner and there is nothing like Him. He is the Beginning and the End. He is the only Creator and He is the only true object of worship. The obvious result of this conception of God is that the universe

must be harmonious and consistent. Indeed, one of the signs of the unity of God is the fact that there is no separation or isolation in any part of the world. The Qur'an says:

> 'Had there been in them [the heavens and the earth] gods other than God, they both had been in disorder.' (21:22)

This consistency in the divine creation extends to His revelations. Divine messages communicated to the people through His messengers are to be harmonious too. If they are revealed by the same God to the recipients (human beings) who have the same nature and the same fundamental needs in order to show them the path towards the best possible perfection and happiness they must be similar in nature and identical in essence. Of course, depending on varying conditions and factors some details may change.

Thus, Muslims believe in conformity of all divine revelations and prophecies. For Muslims interreligious dialogue is an outcome of belief in the conformity of all divine revelations and prophecies and, therefore, they consider all believers in God members of the same community of faith. (3:83) Unity of God manifests itself in the unity of His revelations and must be echoed in the unity of all believers in God. Dialogue is a welcome response to the call of the Qur'an for all people of faith such as Christians and Jews to unify their efforts and concentrate on their common grounds (3:64). Thus, preparing for such dialogue and building upon commonalities is rooted in the Qur'an, and is not just a fashion or formality.

For Christians dialogue can be recognized as an active response to the commandment of love for one's neighbour and the Decalogue: 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.' Through dialogue one tries not to disfigure the image of one's neighbours of different faiths.

Muslims and Christians not only can maintain their faith with integrity throughout the process of a genuine dialogue, but can also show how honest and committed they are to their faith. Muslims and Christians should seek ways in which their communities can enter into dialogue with their neighbours of different faiths. They should also discover ways of responding to similar initiatives by their neighbours in the community.

For any sincere and God-fearing believer failure to establish a genuine and constructive dialogue with the people of other faiths is a very critical and alarming symptom which cannot be easily dismissed by giving priority to other issues or by shifting the responsibility to the other party.

Muslims and Christians alike should be even more self-critical and alert to their responsibilities towards members of their sister faith in those localities or states in which they constitute the majority, or have more power than their fellow citizens from the other faith, or where a well-established community is faced with strangers who come as refugees or asylum-seekers or workers to their village, city, country or continent. Here, in addition to showing your commitment to the general principle of love you must also observe two values which are highly regarded in both Islam and Christianity, that is, hospitality and care, especially for those who are vulnerable. Carelessness may easily lead to forgetting that that you, as a good Muslim or Christian, must show your unconditional love and hospitality to those who need your care and support for their rights, regardless of their faith, race, colour and gender. Let us forget for the moment those who themselves violate the rights of minorities and think they are 'religiously motivated'.

In Islam, the Qur'an praises members of the Household of the Prophet who fasted three days and gave everyday the only little food that they had at home successively to a poor man, an orphan, and a captive:

> 'And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. [They tell them:] we only feed you for God's sake: we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.'(76:8 and 9)

According to a well-known *hadith*, the Prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying:'People are all God's family, so the dearest people to Him are those who benefit His family the most.'[1] The Qur'an asks believers to observe justice even in respect to their enemies:'Do not let your hostilities towards some people make you unjust. Be just. Justice is closer to piety.' (5:8) Indeed, the Qur'an urges people to treat those who have wronged them in the best way so that their enemies become their intimate friends. (41:34 and 35)

In Islamic morality, distinction has been made between *Makarim al-Akhlaq* ('Noble Characteristics') and *Mahasin al-Akhlaq* ('Good Characteristics'). The former involves the minimum requirement for being a moral person, such as reciprocating good and being thankful to those who have favoured us, but the former involves much more, such as being

1 See e.g. Hemyari, 1417 A.H., p. 56.

kind to the people who have wronged you or giving to the people who did not give to you when you were in need. It is interesting to note that in a well-known *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad described his mission as follows: 'Truly I am sent (by God) to complete noble characters'.[2]

According to the New Testament, the new factor in Christian ethics was that it crossed social and religious barriers and saw a neighbour in every suffering human being. As Heydarpoor writes:

> The neighbourly love has to be fulfilled without 'partiality' (James 2:9). In Luke's version of the very story in which the commandment of love is described the lawyer asks Jesus: 'who is my neighbour?' In response Jesus describes the story of the Samaritan. In this story the neighbour is a stranger, an unexpected person (in fact, someone despised) which does not belong to the same community. (Luke 10:29-37)
> ... The universality of the Christian command to love is most strongly expressed in its demand to love one's enemies. Jesus himself said: 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemies.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' (Matthew 5:43-45). Elsewhere we find that he said: 'But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.'(Luke 6:27-29)[3].

Clement suggests that the sign for the depth of one's spiritual progress is nothing other than the ability to love one's enemies. The following story shows the importance of love for enemies:

> One day I saw three monks insulted and humiliated in the same way at the same moment. The first felt he has been cruelly hurt; he was distressed but managed not to say anything. The second was happy for himself but grieved for the one who

2 *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 70, p. 372.

3 Heydarpoor, Mahnaz, *Love in Christianity & Islam*, London and New City, 2002, 2nd edition 2005, pp. 54 and 55.

> had insulted him. The third thought only of the harm suffered by his neighbour, and wept with the most ardent compassion. The first was prompted by fear; the second was urged on by the hope of reward; the third was moved by love[4].

Policies

To have genuine and constructive dialogue, involved parties need to be prepared and plan for everything in advance. Some of the key policies that should be taken into account in planning and running the dialogue can be summed up as follows:

A. To establish trust and overcome any suspicion or historical hatred or unease we should assure our partners in dialogue that we are genuine fellow-pilgrims and do not want to manipulate or convert them. In other words, they must be assured that there is no hidden agenda.

B. Dialogues should normally be planned together. Of course, it is better if every party tries to be as open and accommodative to the suggestions of the other party as possible. In such planning, themes of mutual interest, human and material resources, publicity, publication, date, venue and etc. should be discussed. The planning body or committee must also take into account specificities of their local situation.

C. At least in the beginning the events of dialogue must be mostly based on exploring commonalities. Sensitive and confrontational topics are not appropriate in the early stages of the dialogue, especially if the public and the masses are involved.

D. Although dialogue can go on and on becoming more familiar with each other and discovering in depth the faith of each other, it should be directed towards current issues and challenges in real life in which both parties have an interest and are ready to cooperate. This also helps in keeping the momentum of all parties, especially lay people and activists; otherwise dialogue may become boring for them.

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4 John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Perfection* citing from Clement, O (1993), *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, New City, London, 1993, p. 271.

E. A fertile area of joint efforts can be education. The following are among the things that should be done:

—Teaching programmes in schools, colleges, universities and adult education systems to enhance the understanding of the diversity of cultural and religious traditions of humankind. In such programmes, wherever possible, adherents of each tradition should be able to make their contribution.
—Training ministers of religion in the way they can actively get involved in interreligious dialogue.
—Providing courses or materials for the study of people of other faiths with consultation of the adherents of the same faith.
—Responsible public statements about the other faith and wise use of the media in order to educate a wider audience about interfaith relations.
—Responsible reaction to media presentations which may prejudice the image of the neighbour faith.

F. Partners in dialogue should be allowed to 'define themselves', that is, to describe their faith in their own terms. This is of primary importance since self-serving descriptions of other peoples' faith are one of the roots of prejudice, stereotyping, and arrogance. Listening carefully to the neighbours' self-understanding saves people from bearing false witness against their neighbours. It is only through a reciprocal willingness to listen and learn that significant dialogue can grow.

G. Everyone must be allowed to practice his faith. Therefore in arranging events attention must be paid to the time and place of worship, dietary issues and so on especially by the hosting party. Hospitality requires doing your best to make your guest feel at home and at ease.

H. Sessions should start and end with prayer. Remembrance of God should be maintained throughout the dialogue. In the end we should not forget why we have dialogue and how every achievement depends on His favour and mercy.

Note: In every local or regional context there may be further points to be observed.

Different levels of interreligious dialogue

Different types or levels of interreligious dialogue are singled out in the growing literature on the topic. For example, according to a well-known classification, interreligious dialogue can take one of the following forms:

1. The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joy and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
2. The dialogue of action, in which persons of different religions collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
3. The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of common points as well as those disagreed on.
4. The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual resources, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.[5]

Has dialogue been useful at all?

Faced with the conflicts and problems that exist in the world today, especially after the events of 9/11, some people wonder whether efforts made so far for dialogue have proved useful at all. My answer is: Yes, of course. It is because of intensive efforts in the last few decades that a rich culture of dialogue has been established. It is because of dialogue that at the level of religious leadership there normally exists respect and communication. However, we cannot expect that everything can be solved by the dialogue of religious people. Indeed, even if all the religious leaders and their followers were united still they would not have had all the power and means to stop all the problems. It is a wrong impression to blame religious people for all the conflicts and problems and forget other factors. It is enough to remember that the two world wars of the 20th century were not religiously motivated.

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5 See e.g. M Thomas Thangaraj, *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1999, pp. 95, 96.

Thus, as a Muslim I have no need to compromise about my faith in order to enter into a genuine, sustainable and fertile dialogue with those who believe in God. To me entering into such dialogue and building upon commonalities is rooted in the Qur'an itself, and is not just a fashion or formality. It was in this spirit that since our first visit to the UK in 1996, I and my wife, who, too, is a graduate of the Islamic Seminaries of Qum, in addition to our relations with our Muslim brothers and sisters, have always been looking for friends among people of other faiths. Since the UK is mostly inhabited by Christians we tried to establish relations with them. We were looking for some practising Christians who could represent Christianity and at the same time be open to us. It was such people that could help us to understand directly this great faith, discover our commonalities, and exchange our experiences in facing the challenges of living a life of faith in this modern or post-modern world. We did not look at dialogue as a means to secure peace or prevent conflict. It was too little. We searched for missing relatives; relatives that you know are certainly there and you just need to discover them. Maybe they too are struggling to find you.

To our surprise, it was not easy to find such people. Perhaps we did not have the right contacts. At that time, interfaith networks were not very well-established. In many places, it is still the same. I remember that after 2-3 years of our stay in Manchester my wife phoned her friend in Italy and asked her if she could be of help in this regard. After while, we were contacted by a member of the Focolare movement who visited us in Manchester and then invited us to a day meeting in Liverpool. In that meeting we were very impressed. We noticed lots of similarities between Islam and Christianity and that how a sincere love for God and fellow humans can give a new spirit to life and a new life to modern society. Since then we were able to make lots of personal friends, and also visited many Christian organisations and places of worship and education in many countries. My wife wrote a book, *Love in Christianity & Islam*, which was welcomed by both the Muslims and Christians and was published by New City. The book was reprinted in 2005 and has been translated into Persian, Spanish and Malay.

In the summer of 2001, I gave a series of three lectures on Islam in general, and Islamic spirituality in particular, to the monks and priests in

Ampleforth. The lectures were welcomed and helped us to discover even more what we share. Before returning to Iran, I invited Abbot Timothy Wright and one of the young theologians to visit us in Qum and give lectures and seminars for our students and for the public. After his visit in April 2002, the Abbot wrote in his report to the community in the UK:

> Iran is a religious country, a derogatory description for those attuned to secular countries. For the monk it is not such a confining experience. In a religious country God is not hidden. God's presence is acclaimed, God's Word decorates billboards, and the splendid religious architecture invites to worship. What one sees are not long queues of tourists coming to gape at culture, but streams of pilgrims coming to say their prayers, especially on Fridays. During the day work stops for prayer five times a day—something that is very encouraging for visiting monks. Prayer, public and private, is as normal in a religious society as having meals or buying and selling in the bazaar.
>
> In the towns of Iran the cleric has nothing to hide. We did not feel in the least out of place wearing our monastic habit in the streets; it caused fewer heads to turn than walking down Victoria Street in London. Courtesy is valued: greetings are offered, along with slight bows and the hand on the heart ...
>
> We expected the Shi'i clergy to be suspicious of western Catholic monks. It was not like that. They were attentive, interested and asked good questions. Our sessions overran the two-hour slot on both occasions.

In July 2003, in conjunction with Ampleforth Abbey and Heythrop College, University of London, we were able to organize a five-day conference in London and Ampleforth entitled 'A Catholic and Shi'a engagement: Sharing our spiritual and cultural resources in the face of contemporary challenges'. This conference was considered by *The Tablet* (19 July 2003, p. 13) as 'the first major British encounter of the Catholic theologians with the Iranian Shi'a thinkers and theologians'.[6] A book based on the conference was published in London in 2004, entitled *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue: Studies in Theology and Spirituality*.

6 The conference was also reported under the title of a 'Catholic-Shi'a Engagement (5–10 July 2003)' in the journal of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, *Islamochristiana*, 29, 2003, pp. 238–9.

In April 2004, a delegation of four Catholics—two from Ampleforth Abbey, Abbot Timothy Wright OSB and Fr Bonaventure Knollys OSB, and two from Heythrop College, Anthony O'Mahony and Fr Michael Barnes SJ, visited Iran and gave talks in Qum. After his return, Michael Barnes wrote in a report published in *The Tablet* (22 May 2004):

> Qum has been likened to an Islamic Oxford, a city dedicated to scholarship and study. In every street it seems another institute emerges; there are more than 200, of all shapes and sizes, each dedicated to the single-minded pursuit of learning ...
> The scholarly pursuit of truth is somehow part of the atmosphere ...
> The extraordinary interest in other religions, which we noted in various places, is nothing new; it is an imperative very much rooted in Iranian Shi'a identity ...
> In Qum, however, I discovered something else. Here is an ancient and deeply traditional Islamic world pervaded by the ritual of regular prayer and the insistent demands of scholarship. Serious Muslims ask serious philosophical and theological questions. At one point in our conversation Dr Shomali noted three themes which, he said, characterize Shi'a thinking at its best—rationality, spirituality and justice. They were echoed in our sessions with students and teachers alike.

In July 2005 we had the second conference at Heythrop and Ampleforth Abbey on reason, faith and authority, as a result of which, the second book was launched in November 2006 called *Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Reason and Faith in Theory and Practice.*

In April 2006 Abbot Timothy visited Iran for the third time and gave talks to our seminarians who know him now very well and attended the 19th International Book Fair of Tehran and also the International Conference on Science and Religion.

In July 2007, the third Catholic-Shi'a dialogue was held at Heythrop College and the Benedictine monastery at Worth Abbey. The general theme of the conference was: 'Ethics in Today's Society'. There were four sessions on the general introduction to ethics, environmental ethics, business ethics and bioethics. There was also a session on spiritual direction and a comparative paper on the remembrance of God. Papers presented in this conference along with some other papers are published in this volume.

Now the result of what started 12 years ago is that through my close and intimate relations with many Christians from different denominations in the UK, Italy, USA, Canada, Poland, Philippines, Austria, Iran, etc., I have come to the conclusion that the Qur'anic description and praise of the Christians of the time of the Prophet Muhammad is today in effect. Here in particular I would like to quote the verse 5:82 of the Qur'an:

> ... Surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the faithful to be those who say 'We are Christians.' That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant.

In this verse, the Qur'an states that there are two reasons why the Christians are the nearest in their affection to the Muslims. One reason is that they are humble, and the other reason is that there are priests and monks among them (who encourage them to be pious and love their neighbour). One may not expect that the most important scripture of one religion praises another religious community and their clerics. This is understandable only when we remember that this is the Word of God.

My impression is that many Christians of our time can be credited with the same qualities that the Qur'an attributes to those who lived in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Today you can find sincere, truth-seeking and humble Christians who have devoted their lives to God, and I do not understand why one should not take these people as the real representatives of Christianity, instead of those who show arrogance and are interested more in enmity and fight, rather than sympathy and love. Though this may have been generally the case, I think it is especially true in our age that religious communities, even of the same tradition, are very different and it is too simplistic to think that every single individual or group represents the relevant faith. There are people who are called 'Muslims' or 'Christians' or 'Jews', but by no means can one make a judgement about their faiths by looking at their behaviour. And this gets worse if there is a deliberate attempt to misrepresent religious life in general and certain religions in particular.

So far I have explained why, as a Muslim, I am very happy both in theory and in practice with interreligious dialogue, that is, the dialogue among the believers in God. I believe that commitment to this dialogue (and the working plans that may come out of it) is every one's religious

and human obligation and no one must make it conditional upon the commitment of other parties. In the same way that I feel responsible for performing my daily prayers and giving alms regardless of what others may do, I must feel responsible for working for dialogue regardless what others may do. Of course, it is very helpful and encouraging to see that your partners reciprocate the love and respect that you have for them and their faith.

In 'Mary, Jesus and Christianity: An Islamic Perspective' which was written for the first volume of this series I listed sixteen facts that explain why 'I am very comfortable and pleased with dialogue and solidarity between Muslims and Christians.' The sixteenth relates to the Christian (mostly, the Catholic) understanding of Islam and Muslims where I have tried to illustrate the fact that the Roman Catholic Church—specifically after the Second Vatican Council and most specifically during the papacy of the late John Paul II, by expressing her willingness for dialogue and cooperation with Muslims,[7] high regard for Muslims,[8] recognition of salvation for Muslims,[9] recognition of Islam as a sister faith and Muslims as

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7 For example, on the significance of this dialogue, Pope John Paul II said: 'The Catholic Church wishes to pursue a sincere and fruitful interreligious dialogue with the members of the Jewish faith and the followers of Islam. Such a dialogue is not an attempt to impose our views upon others. What it demands of all of us is that, holding to what we believe, we listen respectfully to one another, seek to discern all that is good and *holy* in each other's teachings, and cooperate in supporting everything that favours mutual understanding and peace' (Pope John Paul II, To Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, Jerusalem, 23 March 2000).

8 For example, on high regard and respect of the Church for Muslims, one may refer to the following passage from *Nostra Aetate*: 'The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting' (*Nostra Aetate* 3).

9 See e.g. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 841 quoting *Lumen Gentium*, No. 16: 'The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day'.

sisters and brothers in faith[10] and respect for the Prophet Mohammad[11]—has taken very important steps towards a genuine and endurable dialogue with Islam and Muslims.

Let us hope and pray that soon we will be able to witness the unity of God echoed in the unity of mankind and that all the wounds of hostility and injustice will be healed by the return of global society to God.

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10 For example, Pope John Paul II said: 'They have, like you, the faith of Abraham in the one, almighty, and *merciful* God' (Pope John Paul II, To the Catholic community in Ankara, 3 December 1979).

'Your God and ours is the same, and we are brothers and sisters in the faith of *Abraham*' (Pope John Paul II, To young Muslims of Morocco, Casablanca, 19 August 1985).

This implies that the Church in her highest levels of authority is moving or has already moved towards recognition of Islam as a genuine expression of the faith of Abraham.

11 For example, Cardinal Tarancón, who was the president of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, stated at the 1977 International Muslim-Christian Conference in Cordoba: 'How is it possible to appreciate Islam and Muslims without showing appreciation for the Prophet of Islam and the values he promoted? Not to do this would not only be a lack of respect to which the [Vatican] Council exhorts Christians, but also neglect of a religious factor of which account must be taken in theological reflection and religious awareness.'

In the same speech, Cardinal Tarancón called on Christians, as did Patriarch Timothy of Baghdad (d. 823), that 'Muhammad walked in the path of the prophets'. (Cited in *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past, Present, Future*, p. 64). It is interesting to know that there are many faithful Christians who go along with the teaching of Paul that there will be authentic prophets after Jesus (1 Cor. 14:29, 39; 12:10, 28; Rom 12:6) and recognize Muhammad as a genuine prophet. For a sample list of Catholic and Protestant thinkers who have written in support of this idea, see *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past, Present, Future*, p. 119, Notes 65 & 66. J. M Gaskell in his *Explaining Islam: Islam from a Catholic Perspective* (p. 29) writes: 'Many Christians tend to think of prophets as essentially Old Testament figures alternately uttering dire warnings and promising a Messianic age of peace, overlooking the fact that the gift of prophecy is one of the Gifts of the Spirit listed by St Paul ...'

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In The Name of Allah

FAITH AND REASON IN SHI'ITE THOUGHT

Mohsen Javadi

The two main sources of Shi'ite thought, the Noble Qur'an and hadiths, especially the narrations from the twelve Imams, both endorse reason in different ways.

In the Noble Qur'an, we can find more than fifty occurrences of the word 'reason' *('aql)* and its derivatives. If we consider the usage of synonyms to 'reason' such as thought *(tafakkur)*, knowledge *('ilm)*, deliberation or meditation *(tadabbur)* and remembrance *(tadhakkur)*, we can find more than three hundred verses of the Qur'an that speak of reason with a tone of admiration and approval.[1] Furthermore, in most of the narrative collections, we see an introductory chapter that speaks of the importance and significance of human reason and its merits. In the most famous Shi'ite narration book called *Al-Kafi*, the very first section is entitled, 'The Book of Reason and Ignorance' which contains thirty-four traditions about reason.

Here we only refer to two verses of the Qur'an and some traditions to show the status of reason in the view of the Shi'ite school.

The noble Qur'an says: 'the worst animals before God are the deaf and dumb, those who do not use their reason' (8: 22). According to this verse, if human beings do not use their reason, they will be worth even less than the animals which have no reason at all.

In the second verse God says: 'And they will say 'if we had only listened and reasoned things out, we would not have been among the dwellers of the blazing fire!' (67: 10). According to this verse human beings can only save themselves from wretchedness by listening to the voices of the prophets and using reason to understand their message and so acting on this guidance.[2]

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[1] Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, Vol. 5, p. 255.

[2] There is some controversy in explaining this verse. Tabarsi, one of the most important Shi'ite scholars in the sixth century takes listening and reasoning to be identical here. See *Majma'*

Here I would also mention some Shi'ite narrations: in the first narration of *Al-Kafi*, God approves of reason and takes it as the most beloved creatures and as the criterion for reward and punishment.

In the second narration from Imam 'Ali, we see a very good and important point that is put in a symbolic way: after creating Adam, God offered him a choice of only one of the three valuable things: *reason, modesty* and *faith*. Adam chose reason and after that Gabriel asked modesty and faith to leave Adam. But they relied that they were ordered by God to stay alongside reason and, in this way, confessed that they are subservient to human reason. We know that modesty is the core of the moral sentiments and every one who lacks it will lose moral motivation and be led to immorality. We see also that in this narration faith is considered as one of the consequences of human reason. The metaphorical meaning of this narration is that moral and religious life can be acquired only in the light of reason.

Imam 'Ali (Peace be upon him) says that those who have no reason have no faith.[3] He also says that the depth and level of everyone's faith is in accordance with his reason.[4] And again, he says that only reason can improve and reconstruct the religious life.[5] In a famous narrative Shi'ite sources take reason as an internal messenger of God alongside the external messengers of God, namely the prophets. In this context, it is completely natural that the Shi'ite school cannot see any conflict between the demands of human reason as internal messenger of God and the content of revelation as the external messenger of God. What is dubious and very questionable is to leave aside these very important teachings and reject reason or revelation or separate them.

The meaning of *reason* and *faith*

The word 'reason' has more than six meanings in Islamic literature and we cannot discuss all of them, so we concentrate only on its usage in *kalam*

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al-Bayan, Vol. 10, p. 72. But on the other hand, Tabataba'i takes the listening as an alternative to reasoning in the way that the former belongs to the majority of people who may not be able to argue properly and the latter to the select group of people who can. See Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, Vol. 19, p. 353.

3 *Sharh Ghurar*, Vol. 6, p. 400, No. 10768.

4 *Op cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 313, No 6183.

5 *Op cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 353, No 1341.

(discursive theology). In *kalam* 'reason' principally refers to some gifted knowledge that human beings possess without knowing how and from where it has been acquired, similar to the Christian concept of natural or general revelation. This original and primary knowledge of humanity is the basis of its secondary and derivative knowledge, and nearly all of humanity has it. The truths of reason include logical rules by virtue of which we can increase our original knowledge (because of which logic has been called an *organon*). And also we can enhance the power of our reason by observing the signs of God around us. The Glorious Qur'an in this regard says that 'have they not travelled around the Earth so they may acquire hearts to reason with or ears to listen with?' (22: 46)

There is a controversy about the number of basic non-derivative principles of human reason, so that some restricted them to only a few and some extended them to more than twenty cases. At any rate, what is important is the potential of our reason to be perfected.

This fundamental knowledge is divided into two different branches: theoretical and practical. Some of these principles, such as the principle of non-contradiction, only helps us to discover some reality in this world and belongs to our theoretical reason, and some of them help us to find a way for living and acting such as the principle of the goodness of justice.

It may be noted that this contrast between theoretical and practical reason is usually misunderstood and confused with some recent theories in morality that deny that moral and practical principles are discovered to be true. Also there is some evidence in our tradition for this interpretation of practical reason as only having a motivating function rather than having cognitive content, but we find in many cases that leading figures of Islamic philosophy and theology take practical reason as guiding via the discovery of facts.

The goodness of justice shows us a very important reality about justice and in this regard is akin to other assertive statements but furthermore stimulates us to act in accordance with justice in virtue of having that property. In the words of Ayatollah Mutahhari the motivation given by practical reason is due to its showing a desirable thing for transcendent human ego.[6] It is held that the human soul is composed of several egos, usually divided into two: the lower or base soul and the

[6] This view is also held by Akhund Khorasani in his famous book on the principles of jurisprudence, *Kifayat al-Usul*.

higher or transcendent soul or ego. Each of these egos is attracted to things appropriate to it, the lower soul is attracted to physical beauties that stimulate the appetite, while the higher ego is attracted to moral excellences and virtues, love of God, charity, etc. Hence, the fact that practical reason motivates action does not contradict the fact that it also discovers moral truths.

So, in this paper, the term 'reason' is used for the content, whether theoretical or practical, obtained through the faculty of reason, not for the faculty itself, because obviously there is no conflict between faith and the faculty of reason. The alleged conflict can only be imagined between the propositions obtained through reason and those obtained through revelation.

Next we must explain briefly what we mean by 'faith'. As we know, there is an ongoing debate in the philosophy of religion about the definition of the basic elements of faith. In brief, we think that faith must have some cognitive elements showing a transcendent being who is omnipotent, omniscience and absolutely good. Every interpretation of faith according to which faith lacks any cognitive content is unacceptable and will reduce faith to some emotional states of mind. Reducing the cognitive element of faith is very common in positivist circles and also among those who are influenced by empiricism. So we must preserve the aspect of discovery in faith through which the highest level of reality is disclosed to human kind. We can call this side of faith the theoretical dimension of faith.

On the other hand we must remember that discovering the highest reality and even seeing it is not sufficient to be given the name of faith. Faith, inevitably, contains an element of submission and commitment, so if we discover God but do not submit ourselves to Him and do not act in accordance with His revelation or, in Islamic terms, *shari'ah*, we will not be among the people of faith. Faith is not just the assent of reason but also requires us to have some devotion towards God and to act in a certain way. This is the practical dimension of faith.

We can conclude that faith parallels reason in having a twofold character: namely theoretical and practical dimensions.

So, multiplying the two forms of reason by the two elements of faith we can ask four questions: (a) what is the relation of theoretical reason to the cognitive element of faith? (b) what is the relation of theoretical reason to the practical dimension of faith? (c) what is the relation of

practical reason to the theoretical side of faith? And finally, (d) what is the relation of practical reason to the practical dimension of faith?

Here, we only discuss two questions, namely (a) and (d) and leave the other questions for another time.

I

The relation between theoretical reason and theoretical faith

Three theoretical articles of faith common to all the Abrahamic religions are belief in God, the resurrection and the prophets. Knowing God and understanding the resurrection of mankind and also accepting the mediating role of the prophets constitute theoretical object-claims, claims that cannot be reduced to mental or subjective attitudes or states. On the other hand, human reason makes many object-claims about the reality and the structure of the world. What relation can be held between these religious claims and the other claims of reason? To discuss the problem exactly, we must explain the form of religious claims and then consider their relation to non-religious claims.

Some Muslim scholars, such as Shaykh Saduq, hold that the basic religious claims are innate and cannot be—or at least need not be—inferred from other deliverances of reason. Their belief in this idea is rooted in some verses of the Qur'an and some narrations of the Twelve Imams. God says: 'So set your face on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of God, according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering God's creation. That is the upright religion, but most people do not know.' (30: 30).

They interpret this verse as asserting that religion is something that human reason has from the very beginning of creation, and that the prophets have come to invite us to pay more attention to this innate character of our reason. If we accept the innateness of religious claims, especially belief in God, then the question of the relation between theoretical faith and reason comes to be a question of the coherence between different basic non-inferential claims of reason. The basic claims of reason cannot contradict each other; so, to justify religious belief, we need only to show that it is an innate understanding of our reason. What is needed to justify religious belief is not logical proof, but phenomenology.

On the other hand, many of the important figures in Islamic philosophy, theology and even jurisprudence, hold that religious claims, especially the claim of God's existence, are not innate and can be acquired only by argumentation. Shaykh Mufid, Sayyid Murtada, Shaykh Tusi and many others interpret the verse mentioned above in another way to mean that accepting religious claims is not innate in human reason but is the end or goal of a thoughtful endeavour. The prophets invite us to know a new thing which was not known by us before. For them the question of relation comes to take the form of the possibility of inferring a religious claim—say God's existence—from natural reason. This inevitability of argumentation for religious claims has led Islamic scholars to seek arguments for religious beliefs over the course of centuries. The Shi'ite tradition is full of different arguments for religious claims. Because of this, Shi'ite theology has taken the form of a philosophical theology and we cannot distinguish discussions of God, resurrection and the prophets in Shi'ite theology from those found in philosophy.

The domination of this rationalistic approach in the Shi'ite tradition was, and still is, so strong that even in the beginning of the standard books of practical religious rulings of Shi'ite jurisprudence *(risalah)*, the jurists advise those who would follow them that in the area of the theoretical dimensions of faith all people must rely on their own reason and it is not acceptable to hold such beliefs by way of imitation. This rich tradition of rational discourse in the Shi'ite school has been understood mainly through the teachings of the Twelve Imams, but is now available to all. Various models of argumentation have been employed, including demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric as the circumstances demand. So, according to this idea, although religious beliefs are not among the original and basic deliverances of human reason, they are derived and inferred from natural reason or, in the words of Muslim theologians, are among those that reason urges us to accept.

There are some important points that must be mentioned in this regard:

a) There is a growing tradition in western culture called reformed epistemology, according to which reason cannot, or need not, prove God's existence but can justify belief in Him. For example, Plantinga holds that the belief in God can be properly basic and not inferential, or can be warranted with reference to some external elements of our cognitive

faculties. This form of apologetic for religious belief is sometimes confused with the idea of the innateness of religious belief which was and is still held by some Muslim theologians. But we must keep in mind that the idea of innateness is not an apologetic idea, but is to assert that reason by itself and without any mediation sees and understands God's existence. In other words, this is a first order claim while the reformed epistemology is a second order claim concerning human beliefs that tries to show that this form of belief, despite the possibility of error, is rationally justified. The dominant idea of the necessity for argumentation to support religious beliefs is to deny the core idea of reformed epistemology. According to reformed epistemology, one can be entitled to the name 'believer' by a chance of accidentally having some religious belief, while being justified or warranted is an independent epistemic problem. The failure to have justified or warranted belief does not prevent one from having correct religious beliefs. However, in the Shi'ite theological tradition, the rational justification of one's beliefs is considered a necessary condition for faith. One may only be called a believer if one tries and successfully grasps the main principles of faith. This is the only sort of faith that can be the centre of the galaxy of virtue and on which divine reward and punishment can be based.

b) We have been told that natural reason in the Shi'ite tradition has been admitted, approved and counted as the basis of faith. But there is a difficulty in this treatment of reason. Natural reason, especially logical arguments, in some cases lead people to take contradictory positions about religious claims.

We must keep in mind that the occurrence of error in using human reason is undeniable; at the same time, this does not mean that all usage of reason is in error. We must distinguish between correct inferences of natural reason and its mistakes in application. When we talk about natural reason and take it to lead us to religious truths, we assume that we will use it correctly. This problem is not limited to natural reason, but will arise in the case of the guidance of revelation, as well. This revealed knowledge that God has sent to help people to find their happiness, unfortunately, in many cases is misunderstood. This is why we find some people who use allegedly religious beliefs to justify war, the occupation of the lands of others, financial corruption and terrorism. This is the problem of *the person* who relies on reason or revelation and not reason or revelation by

themselves. In the Qur'an, God says 'Thereby [by parables in revelation] He leads many astray and thereby He guides many and He leads no one astray save the transgressors' (2: 25).

In using our faculty of natural reason we need to distinguish correct premises from erroneous ones, and the same applies to revelation. We need to distinguish the definitive verses from the equivocal ones,[7] and the reliable narrations from the unreliable ones.

c) Although reason is common among human beings, we see that in many verses of the Qur'an it is asserted that in practice only the purified people can think or reason, or can remember, and immoral persons can not grasp good knowledge. 'Yet no one takes admonition except he who returns penitently to Allah' (40: 13), 'And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him and provide for him from whence he does not reckon' (65: 2). And there are many narrations that show that having a good knowledge depends on having a good religious and moral character.

Allamah Tabataba'i replies that purification and good actions are not a separate way of knowledge, but are only a context for employing reason in an appropriate way. It is worth quoting him at length on this issue:

> There is no doubt that the Qur'an and hadiths give importance to piety in respect of knowledge. But it does not mean that they have made piety an independent way for acquiring knowledge of realities, separate from the natural way of contemplation which man inevitably treads upon. Otherwise, all the arguments and disputations brought in the noble Book against the unbelievers, polytheists, and immoral and sinful persons would become irrelevant—they do not follow the truth and do not know what piety and remembrance is; accordingly, they are unable to attain the intended goal. Consequently, it is pointless to argue with them ... In fact, piety is considered necessary for bringing the human intelligent soul back to its natural uprightness.[8]
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> The foregoing details clearly show that the Qur'an has made thought, remembrance and understanding conditional upon

[7] See Qur'an (3: 7).

[8] *Al-Mizan*, tr. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, WOFIS, Tehran, 2001, Vol. 10, p. 85 (with slight changes in the translation).

> piety (God-fearing), and has joined knowledge with practice in order that man may attain to straight thinking and correct knowledge which is free from animalistic imaginations and Satanic insinuations.[*]

Allamah Tabataba'i adds that although following the way of piety makes otherwise unavailable knowledge accessible to man, this claim does not conflict with the general support given in the Qur'an to natural reason independent of piety. So, piety provides an endorsement of theoretical reason at the same time that it provides support for theoretical faith.

d) We have argued that the principal theoretical doctrines of religion are deliverances of natural reason, but there is another problem concerning the relation of reason not to the principals but to other subsidiary theoretical teachings of religion. Here, for example, we can ask about the relation of religious doctrines about the creation of the world and the heavens to philosophical or scientific knowledge. Here I can say briefly that according to Shi'ite tradition, reason and its achievements, if obtained in a correct way, may legitimately affect how we are to understand religion. In the words of the exegetes of the Qur'an, reason can provide a sort of non-linguistic context in terms of which the text itself is to be understood. Certainly revelation is a mirror of God's creation, and by using our reason we can better see what the reality in that mirror is.

The relation between practical reason and practical faith

The practical principles of natural reason such as the goodness of justice are aimed at action, but as we mentioned, contrary to some non-cognitive interpretations of ethics, this aiming at action comes from its aiming at truth. Hence, practical reason, just as much as theoretical reason, is concerned with discovery. But what about the practical rules of religion?

There is a theological school in the Muslim world called *Ash'ari*, whose adherents hold a form of divine command theory according to which what is right or good is entirely dependent on the voluntary and arbitrary decrees of God. This theory is incompatible with moral realism.

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[*] *Ibid.*, 88.

Knowing what is right, in the Ash'arite theory, is reduced to knowing what God wants; it does not involve the discovery of the nature of moral reality. When God says that justice is good, He only asks us to act accordingly and does not make any objective claim about moral facts. According to this view, moral properties of things are subjective claims in relation to God. In Islamic terms the moral properties are not essential *(dhati)*, but are divine *(ilahi)*. If we interpret the moral properties in this way, the natural way to understand goodness and badness is to take them from revelation and not by natural reason. According to this divine command theory, there is nothing in reality to be discovered as the basis of rational guidance. Human reason in practical matters must only try to hear exactly the voice of revelation and act accordingly.

Contrary to this school, Shi'ite tradition holds that the moral properties are rooted in the very essence of things and religious practical rules are based on these objective properties. According to this view, moral properties are essential *(dhati)* and at the heart of reality. Reason has the power to understand these properties, and human beings can have morality even without religion. Furthermore, religion itself can be accepted only by having some independent rational reason, because if good and evil are entirely dependent on revelation, the good of the revelation itself is undermined, for we would not have any means independent of the revelation to verify it and submit to it.[10]

In this rationalistic approach, we encounter a question of occurrences of conflict between religious rules of life and human independent practical understanding. It may seem that there are more conflicts between practical reason and religious rules of behaviour than the conflicts between theoretical reason and religious doctrines. However, in the Shi'ite school, the two sorts of apparent conflict are really one, for the deliverances of practical reason revert to theoretical points, and contrary to divine command theory, the practical rules of religion are also grounded in moral realities, so that there can be no conflict with the deliverances of practical reason here. However, it often appears that there are differences because of an incorrect understanding of the moral realities involved. Allamah Tabataba'i explains that in this area, since what is at stake often includes worldly profit and loss, human beings are more likely to rationalize their desires and proclaim something to be derived

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[10] Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Nawbakht, *Al-Yaqut*, Bidar, Qum, 1984, p. 51.

from reason when it is really due to worldly desires. Here religion can help by providing us with guidance so that such self-deceptions can be avoided. On the other hand, in areas where reason gives clear indication of what is right or wrong and there is an apparent conflict with religion, we will have to reform our understanding of religion. Thus, whenever there seems to be a conflict between a position made by reason and another made by religion we must re-examine both and be sure that at least there has been one mistake whether in understanding real judgement of reason or real judgement of religion.

A GENERAL SCHEME OF ETHICS IN SHI'ISM

Hujjatu'l-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Abdul Hosein Moezzi

This paper does not seek to deal with ethics as ethicists have done, or to deal with the philosophy of ethics as moral philosophers have done, but rather this paper seeks to deal with a general scheme of ethics as one of the main subjects which are called in Islam the triangle of the Islamic teachings, i.e., creed, law and ethics. The subject of ethics in Islam, especially in Shi'i Islam, plays a major role in guiding mankind. The Prophet of Islam said: 'Traits of character are the receptacle of religion.'

The subject of ethics from the Islamic point of view is so important that God, the Exalted, when praising the Prophet, says: 'and indeed you possess a great character,' (68: 4) and the Prophet of Islam describes his most fundamental function as follows: 'I was sent to bring to perfection the traits of character [within man].' (*Mizan al-Hikamah*, hadith no. 1520) Also the Prophet of Islam says: 'God, the Glorious, made the noble traits of character a bond between Him and His servants. Therefore, it would suffice if each of you hold fast to the character associated with God' (*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 1532). Also, Imam Sadiq, the Sixth Imam, says: 'God, the Glorious and the Exalted, endowed the Messenger of God with the noble traits of character. So adorn yourselves with the noble traits of character. If you possess these virtues, praise God, the Blessed and the Exalted, and ask Him to be endowed with more noble traits of character.' (*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 1530)

This scheme derives from the twin sources of the Qu'ran and the Tradition *(sunnah)* and occasionally relies on the views and ideas of Shi'a scholars. This paper will deal with some of the pivotal points which are considered to be the main points of this scheme.

I

The word *akhlaq* in Arabic, which is the plural of *khulq*, means temper and character and is rooted within the inner animalistic and human forces of man. Every religion or school of thought, when dealing with good, evil, decent and indecent traits of character and their effects on man's fate and on his this-wordly and other-worldly lives, should first of all deal with the place of man within that religion or school of thought. Thus in this paper, first, we will specify the place of man from the point of view of Shi'i Islam.

Of course, the Qur'an has dealt extensively with how man was created and with the course of his development and his psychic and spiritual individual and social states. However, in this paper, we do not intend to touch upon them. We will only deal with the fundamental subject of the place of man from the Quranic point of view.

1. Man is the vicegerent of God on earth. The Qur'an says:

> when your lord said to the angels, indeed I am going to set a vicegerent on the earth. (2.30)

It is understood from this verse and from the following verses that God told the angels that He would appoint His vicegerent on earth and that his qualities are a reflection of Him, and since man has learned all the realities [of things], he has the ability to fulfil His vicegerency on earth.

This verse points out that as a result of the grace shown by God to man, he was endowed with certain potentialities and because of that he holds a special place in the order of creation, and this position is limited to him only and also being the vicegerent of God on earth indicates the distinctive feature of man (*Al-Mizan*, Vol. 1, p. 115).

2. Man is the only being endowed with dignity. The Quran says:

> Certainly we have honoured the Children of Adam ... and given an advantage over many of those we have created. (17. 70)

It is also understood from this verse that God showed more favour to man than to the other beings, because He honoured only him, and made him superior to all other beings (*Tafis-e Nemunah*, Vol. 12, p. 199).

Human dignity means being endowed with many powers, the highest and most important of which are intellect and free will. Through intellect and free will as possessed by man, he can find right and sound beliefs and also attain the right traits of character and the perfection which are worthy of him and thus become superior to the other creatures. The Prophet of Islam said:

> Intellect is a light which God created for man and made it the illuminator of the heart. (*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 3880)

Imam Sadiq quotes Imam 'Ali as saying:

> God only endowed the angels with intellect only and with no instinctive desires and He endowed the animals with only instinctive desires but the children of Adam were endowed with both intellect and instinctive desires. Therefore, if his intellect overcomes his sensual desires, he will be superior to the angels and if his intellect is overcome by his desires, he will be lower than animals. (*Mizan al-Hikamh*, hadith no. 426)

3. Man bears the Trust of God. The Qur'an says:

> Indeed we presented the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they refused to bear it and were apprehensive of it but man undertook it. (34:72)

This verse of the Qur'an indicates the lofty state of man in the order of creation. In this verse, a comparison has been made between the heavens and the earth, and the mountains and man.

Heaven symbolizes highness, the earth vastness, and the mountains' steadfastness. On the one hand, man is a being of small stature and weak. By looking at the heavens and the earth and the mountains and man, man can never equal them let alone brag and boast of them. But the wording of God, the Creator, the All-wise and the All-Knowing, which seems to be symbolic, indicates that the heavens and the earth and the mountains despite all their grandeur, could not accept the trust and were in awe of the grandeur of that trust and it was man who accepted the divine trust and became the bearer of the trust of God.

The question which is raised is: What is this trust? And how will men deal with this trust? And what effect will accepting the trust

leave on them? This paper does not seek to answer these questions. It is only a reminder that the above verse is one of the most controversial of the Quranic verses, and the Quranic commentators and most Muslim scholars have dealt with it in detail. In short, it seems that the divine trust as undertaken by man is something that it is only possible for man to bear, and that as a result of accepting true and sound beliefs and acting upon the obligations and injunctions that God ordained for him, he endeavours diligently and traverses the path of God sincerely. Such a human being who surrenders to God and obeys him and worships God sincerely will enjoy the protection of God in life and in the light of divine sanctity he will ascend from the lower animal states to the highest rank of humanity and to the state of proximity to God and will achieve the sought-after perfection worthy of him and the lofty rank as willed by God for him. This verse teaches us that it is only man who possesses such potentialities and it is only he who can be the bearer of the trust of God on earth and enjoy the sanctity of God (*Al-Mizan*, Vol. 16, pp. 348-352).

II

What is understood from these three states of man is that man in terms of capacity and the inner and spiritual potentialities deserves attaining the rank of the vicegerency of God and also deserves being honoured by God, becoming superior to other beings and being the bearer of the trust of God and in the light of divine sanctity attaining the state of proximity to God. Of course, it does not mean that men are actually qualified with these states, but rather it means that man potentially possesses such potentialities and can actualize them. But if man does wrong and causes corruption and depravity on earth, God will dismiss him from the rank of vicegerency. Also, if he commits sins and avoids worshipping and obeying God and breaks the laws of God, he will lose his dignity and also if he associates God with a partner and deals with the religious truths hypocritically, he will betray the divine trust and consequently he will lose his human rank.

III

As God endowed man with such great assets as the potentialities mentioned above, is he free to employ his abilities or ignore them? The answer to

the question from the Shi'ite point of view is that man is a being of free choice and can choose as he wishes and spend his life as he wishes. There are many verses in the Quran testifying to this truth. For example, the Qur'an says:

> There is no compulsion in religion; rectitude has become distinct from error. (2.256)
>
> Verily, we have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful. (76.3)
>
> ... by the soul and him who fashioned it, and inspired it with [with discernment between] its virtues and vices: one who purifies it is certainly felicitous, and one who betrays it certainly fails. (91.7–10)

Apart from the above-mentioned verses, reason also rules that attaining human accomplishments and values can be possible for man, if, and only if, he is of free will and believes that he possesses free will. Of course, human freedom is not in conflict with God's control over everything, as explained in theology.

IV

The other question which arises here is: Which factors and motives are required in order to uplift man to the states that God has prepared for him? It should be said that the strongest motive of man in every task is the faith derived from knowledge of that task. The deeper and deeper his knowledge is, the deeper and firmer his faith will become.

On the one hand, not only does faith make man struggle, against various psychic, spiritual and social pressures, it also makes him stronger and makes his hard work easier for him. Therefore, for the attainment of those states, correct and deep knowledge of them is as necessary as firm and lasting faith is necessary for man.

V

It should be stated that in order to attain the states and ranks that God has prepared and willed for man, faith and belief only are not sufficient,

but rather performing decent and proper acts as ordained by God are also required, because without performing them, man cannot attain the states worthy of him. Thus, the Qur'an says:

> By time! Indeed man is at a loss except those who have faith and do righteous deeds. (103.1-3)

Symbolically speaking, in the same way that no bird can fly with only one wing, man cannot attain the states and ranks mentioned above with faith alone. Hence, the Qur'an says:

> ... good words rise up to Him and He lifts up the righteous deed. (35.10)

VI

The obligations and injunctions that, if acted upon by man, will lead him to attain the states and ranks worthy of him, have been laid down as commands and prohibitions by God and are based on his best interests as conveyed to the Prophet through the revelation and thereby have reached man. Believing in and acting upon them is necessary and thus, for the attainment of those states, faith should be accompanied by submission. The main point here is that belief and submission and sincere obedience of man to God is not something imposed on him, as God created all men in such a way as to seek God, truth and perfection. The Qur'an says:

> So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of God according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering God's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know). (30.30)

Therefore, as man is by nature endowed with an inner urge to seek God, not only is obedience accompanied by surrender of the heart not imposed on him, but rather it is a means of fulfilling his inner needs.

VII

On the other hand, there are within man other forces and tendencies that if obeyed unconditionally will prevent him fulfilling the will of God and acting upon good and decent acts. Such unconditional obedience to instinctive desires and tendencies not only prevents man from surrendering to God and obeying Him, but in truth it is a threat to faith. Some of these powers, drives and desires consist of: ingratitude to God, neglect and forgetfulness of the Sacred Divine Essence, egotism, self-conceit, self-aggrandizement, jealousy, anger, love of wealth accumulation, greed, covetousness, stinginess, love of power, cruelty, indulgence in sexual desires, and so many other forces and desires that if obeyed and gratified unconditionally and improperly will doubtless do harm to faith, and if not irremediable, it should be said that they are barely remediable.

VIII

God has endowed man with a soul, an aspect of which the Qur'an calls 'the commanding self'. This self always commands man to fulfil his desires and wishes unconditionally. Of course, the existence of this self is necessary for the continuation of human life, if it is harnessed and if man benefits from it properly, since this soul is so uncontrollable and powerful that it always commands man to fulfil his desires unconditionally. Therefore, within man there is always a battle between his carnal desires and what is willed by God, reason and man's original nature. God requires man to ascend to the high peaks of perfection and so do reason and man's original nature, while the commanding soul commands him to evil, corruption; and inner conflict and battle within man is so strong and serious that the holy Prophet called it the great struggle. Of course, it does not mean that man will definitely be defeated in this struggle, because if anyone takes refuge in God and asks for His help, doubtless he will benefit from His endless mercy, which will help him in this struggle.

IX

God also endowed man with another aspect to the soul, which the Qur'an calls the blaming self. The function of this soul is that when man takes the wrong path and commits sins, it will blame him so much that he returns to the right path which is the path of God and repents. Through a careful consideration, the role of this self is to establish equilibrium within man. The commanding self commands man to evil and the blaming self always blames him and thus balance is established within man. When balance is established, man attains the state of the self at peace which is the third of the stages of the soul within man.

The Qur'an describes those who have been able to attain the stage of the soul at peace as the servants with whom God is pleased and says:

> O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! Then enter among My servants! And enter my paradise! (89.27-29)

Therefore, we learn from the Qur'an that spiritual peace is attained only in the light of faith and remembrance of God:

> Those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of God. Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance. (13.28)

X

It has been already said that man possesses numerous desires which if properly employed by him will be useful and necessary for the continuation of material life and also for the attainment of high spiritual and human ideals. If these desires disobey the commands of reason, are unbridled, lose their balance and are changed into vices, they will be harmful and destructive.

So what is to be done? In order for instinctive desires to obey the commands of reason and in order for man to attain his optimum perfection, and to control his instinctive desires—in other words, in order to improve his traits of character—two paths can be taken into consideration: the first one is firm belief in God and in eternal life in the next world. Thus,

he can properly control and direct his sensual desires, because the first outcome of following sensual desires is that man will be cut off from God, and consequently sensual desires will be his lord:

> Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god? (5.43)

The second outcome is that which Imam 'Ali describes:

> Obeying one's carnal desires makes one blind, deaf, lowly and astray. (*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 6695)

Without doubt, one whose inner eyes become blind and whose inner ears become deaf and who does not see the signs of God and who lacks knowledge of his God, so that he may believe in Him and worship him, he is a misguided man who is deprived and abased in his human life. He can hardly return to God and discover the truth. Imam 'Ali also said:

> One who obeys one's carnal desires has sold his next life in exchange for his worldly life. (*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith no. 6695)

Therefore, firm faith in God and life in the next world is the strongest force which prevents man from obeying his carnal desires and such a human being not only brings his desires under the control of his reason but is also he always is mindful of not obeying any desire save that which is wished by God. Such a man will be successful and will be placed in paradise. The Qur'an says:

> But as for him who is awed is saved to stand before his Lord and forbids the soul from [following] desire, his refuge will indeed be paradise. (79.40-41)

Therefore, faith in God and the reward and punishment of the next world is the right path to control one's desires and it also prevents man from obeying his carnal desires and helps him change his evil traits of character into good ones. This is a path to which the divinely-inspired prophets have invited man and asked him to obey God and be mindful of Him and fear divine punishment.

The second path for controlling lower desires and improving one's traits of character is to have a deep knowledge of God, the Exalted, and to feel oneself in the presence of God. The Qur'an says:

> This is Allah, your Lord, there is no god except Him, the creator of all things, so worship Him. (6.102)
>
> ... the All-mighty, the All-merciful, who perfected everything that He created. (32.7)
>
> All are obedient to Him. (2.116)

If he attains such understanding and knowledge of God, man will gain a firm faith in God, which nothing can shake. The Qur'an says: 'Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him.' (7:23) '... Is it not sufficient that your lord is witness to all things? Look! He indeed comprehends all things!' (41:53-54)

Without question, such knowledge, from which results faith mixed with love of the Sacred Divine Essence, will leave no room within man for self-aggrandizement, jealousy, stinginess, anger, cowardice, love of power worldliness and so on. Without question, faith accompanied by knowledge and sincerity not only drives base qualities away from man but it also blocks the path of satanic temptations within his heart, because Satan knows that he cannot conquer the servants who have purified themselves for God and cannot divert them from the path of God. Therefore, those who have purified their hearts of inner impurity and who seek and wish nothing but the pleasure of God always live under the protection of God. They are worthy of vicegerency on earth and God-given nobility and also worth being the bearers of the Trust of God. Therefore, the best way for improving the traits of character is the very way that is the way of knowledge of God and deep knowledge of His Oneness, whose fruit is faith mixed with love of God. Therefore the best way for improving and purifying the soul and attaining high moral values is the way of faith in God mixed with love, which is also the way of Islam, the way of a religion whose most fundamental principle is the Oneness of God, which is the spirit and also the quintessence of all its doctrines and individual and social laws and injunctions.

CATHOLIC CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: A SURVEY OF MODERN PAPAL TEACHING

John Flannery

This paper[1] will attempt to provide an overview of modern Catholic teaching on the environment, and particularly that of the papal magisterium,[2] covering the forty years or so since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).[3] Before beginning our survey of some of the more important texts, it may be useful to say a few words about the Council itself.

On the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli was elected to the papacy, taking the name of John XXIII. Elected as a safe, caretaker pope, he surprised the Church by calling the Second Vatican Council, which held its first session in October 1962. This Council of the world's bishops differed from those preceding it, as it was called not to define a particular element of doctrine, or to condemn a specific error, but

1 A somewhat modified version of the presentation to the third Catholic-Shi'a Conference on 7 July 2007 at Heythrop College, University of London. I am grateful to Liam Hayes for his valuable and insightful input.

2 It may be useful here to say something about the hierarchy of teaching authority in the Catholic Church. The teachings we will be considering here will fall largely into the category of the 'ordinary' magisterium or teaching office of the Church. Here the greatest authority attaches to the teachings of Church councils convened by the pope, followed by papal encyclical letters and apostolic exhortations. The addresses to organisations and groups are less authoritative, but serve to provide a better understanding of papal teaching and its development. Not at issue in the material we will review is any exercise of the rarely used 'extraordinary' magisterium, whereby the pope, having consulted widely within the Church, issues formal guidance *ex cathedra* on matters of faith or morals.

3 As will become apparent, Catholic teaching on the environment has developed in an organic rather than programmatic fashion, with references widely dispersed and often embedded in other texts. Many of these have been gathered together in Marjorie Keenan *From Stockholm to Johannesburg: an historical overview of the concern of the Holy See for the environment: 1972-2002* Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City, 2002. Extracts from the major texts are given in the extensive appendix, while the analytical section makes reference to numerous more obscure sources. I acknowledge my considerable indebtedness to this valuable resource from which I have drawn extensively.

—*Passion for the Earth: the Christian vocation to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation*, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1994.
—*Greening the Christian Millennium*, Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1999.
—*Why are we deaf to the cry of the earth?*, Dublin, Veritas, 2001.
—*Climate change: the challenge to all of us*, Dublin, Columba Press, 2006.
Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004.

Journal

Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (formerly *Ecotheology*), London, Equinox.

Web Resources

The major documents of the Catholic magisterium can be accessed from http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm.
Faiths in Creation Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, Heythrop College, University of London http://heythrop.ac.uk/hirepl-projects/faiths-in-creation.html.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: A SHI'A STANDPOINT

Makbul Rahim and Mohsen Javadi

It is only in the very recent times that our society's moral systems and ethics as a whole have been keenly challenged by deep and serious questions about the environment. The extent of the possible damage that human beings can cause to the environment and the natural world today has been exponentially enhanced by ultra-modern technology which has provided individuals with extraordinary tools, processes and capacities for impacting on and damaging the environment that were not even imaginable in the past. This has led to the need for modern society to examine our moral and ethical views on the environment. In this paper we will begin by briefly considering the present-day concerns about the environment and our natural world and the importance of environmental issues and concerns in the 21st century and then focus on and discuss the principles of Islam's philosophy of natural order and creation and the ecological outlook of Islam and the guidance that it offers to the present-day world on environmental issues and ethics.

Present day concerns about the environment and our natural world

When 30 years ago three scientists working independently linked the hole in the ozone layer to CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) from refrigeration, air-conditioning, sprays and foams and could show the relationship between the hole in the ozone layer and resultant ultraviolet radiation that could lead to exponential increase in skin cancer, the world reacted very quickly and 150 countries signed and ratified the Montreal Protocol that effectively capped and arrested the CFC release in the atmosphere. By 2004 the ozone layer had shrunk by 20 percent and within 50 years scientists are hopeful of restoration of the ozone layer to its original form.

There was effective and timely intervention by humanity in the case of CFCs. The success of the transition from CFCs to other benign chemicals to cool homes and offices could be attributed to it being simpler, on a much smaller scale and targeting one specific industry that used CFCs. With incentives industry could be induced to make the transition.

The response of the world community to global warming and climate change has been disappointing. The Kyoto Protocol is a feeble response and too modest to make a significant impact on global warming. It merely asks for a modest reduction in six greenhouse gases of 5 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. Even if the targets of the Protocol are achieved the global temperature will still rise by a few degrees centigrade with devastating consequences for the coastal communities of the world. Some large, developed world-polluters are outside the Kyoto Protocol and many countries, including developing countries like China and India, are making massive additions to the global carbon burden.

In the case of global warming the scale of the transition from fossil fuels to cleaner energy is massive. Energy is the critical driver for the global economy and pervades our lives. The impact of globalisation and reliance on mobility both international and national makes huge demands on energy. Humanity is overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuel consumption not only for development but for survival. Commercial energy is required both in cities and towns where 46 percent of the world's population lives and in rural areas for food production. Commercial energy is required not only for factories, cars, trains, buses and planes and high-rise offices but also for pumping water and providing electricity and other necessities to homes. Multi-trillion dollar global businesses have been built around fossil fuels and the energy industry and millions of jobs depend on commercial energy. In rural areas farming communities and the food industry needs commercial energy and world food security depends on it. All these factors reduce the chance of a quick transition to a less energy intensive world.

The objective of the UN framework Convention on Climate Change is to mitigate climate change and achieve the stabilisation of greenhouse gas atmospheric concentrations. It needs deep reductions in global energy related to carbon dioxide emissions. Developing countries face the dilemma of environment versus development. The present-day carbon emissions are the cumulative result of development activities over several decades of present-day developed countries.

The issue that comes to the forefront in developmental economics is whether developing countries should be allowed to pollute until they reach a certain threshold level of development or whether both developing countries and developed countries should promptly move to a clean growth model. This requires the ready access of developing countries to clean energy technologies and the reduction and removal of global barriers of intellectual property rights and patents which constitute roadblocks to this access.

The impact of clean energy technology on coal-burning in China and India would be enormous. Both are endowed with abundant coal but coal, however, has the highest carbon content among fossil fuels. Coal-fuelled electricity generation accounts for 50 percent of world carbon emission and constitutes 75 percent of electricity generation capacity in India. Conventional coal-fuelled plants do not burn coal efficiently and less than one third of the energy content is converted into electricity. Increasing efficiency of coal-burning and sequestering of carbon from coal would enable China and India to transmit clean growth energy. The range of commercially tested technologies for efficient burning and sequestering safely of carbon is available but not accessible to or affordable by developing countries. These road blocks constrain the ability of developing countries to deal with the tension between development and growth and poverty alleviation and preservation of the environment.

Importance of environmental issues and concerns in the 21st century

The specific concerns about the environment include air and water pollution, toxic pollution from industrial waste, over-exploitation, desertification, water scarcity, climate change and global warming, emission of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases, reduction of the ozone layer and harm caused by UV radiation from the sun's rays, acid rain, deforestation, destruction and over-exploitation of medicinal plants, soil erosion, wildlife extinction and toxic waste management, awareness of degradation of ecology and environment, loss of bio-diversity, damage to sustainable development and resource management.

There is also the fear of flooding and coastal erosion caused by rising sea levels and extreme weather and storms. It is stated that 150,000

people die every year from climate change. The economic cost of global warming is doubling every decade. People affected by disasters is up from 740 million in the 1970s to two billion in the 1990s. Land stricken by drought has more than doubled in the last thirty years. By 2025 three billion people could be affected by serious water shortages. The UN expects 50 million environmental refugees by 2010 and 150 million such refugees by 2050. It is predicted that 30 million people could starve because of climate change by 2050.

Key concepts bearing on the formation of Islamic environment ethics

Tawhid *(Unity of God)*

He is the one absolute creator of all creation and He brings into existence creation from non-existence. His act of creation has a definite purpose and humanity and the universe and all in it are all part of the creation of God to fulfil the purpose of creation which is to worship God through living life on earth in accordance with His guidance. Ownership of all things is with God, the Creator and Sustainer. As stated in the Qur'an, everything in the earth and in the heavens belongs to God, 'And, to God belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth.' (53. 31)

Human responsibility

Humanity is responsible to God for all its actions and deeds. Human beings are accountable for their trust and actions and deeds. Human beings have been given the greatest capacity for perfection and closeness to God. They also have been given the responsibility of stewardship and trust *(al-amanat)* by God to care for and serve as a conduit of the blessings of God for all creation. Humans are invested with special status and responsibility as trustees on earth. The holy Qur'an states: 'We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it.' (33.72)

The balance and natural order in the universe created by God must be preserved. The environment is not only for the present generation but is God's gift *(ni'mah)* for all ages past, present and future. Preservation

of the environment is one of the basic principles of Islam. It exhorts the maintaining of God-given resources for ourselves and ensuring the availability of these resources for generations yet to come on earth until the Day of Judgement. Others also have a right to these resources and we are accountable to them for the present generation's utilisation of resources. Islam exhorts conservation consciousness, wise use of the resources without miserly hoarding of resources or wastage and unfair utilisation. Islam forbids excess and inequity in any form. Human beings are God's creation and the channels of God's mercy and grace to the rest of creation and bearers of divine trust. As the best of all creation they have been given intellect and humanity and knowledge and guidance to fulfil that role.

Permission to utilise but not waste natural resources

The historian, Lynn White, in his classical paper 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crises', takes the view that the Judeo-Christian worldview is the most influential element in the formation of the Western mind and attributes to it the root of our ecological crises. According to him, Christianity sees nature as alien; as a mere resource to be exploited, and takes man to be destined to dominate nature. This concept has been taken from some verses in the Bible, such as 'God created man in the image of Himself; in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.' God blessed them, saying to them 'be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth.'[1] The idea of nature to have been created for human beings, however, is not restricted to Christianity and can be found in other Abrahamic traditions and in Islam.

In the holy Qur'an God says: 'It is God, who created the heavens and the earth, and He sends down water from the sky and with it He brings forth crops for your sustenance. And He disposed the ships for you so that they may sail at sea by His command, and He disposed the rivers for you. He disposed the sun and moon for you constant (in their courses), and He disposed the night and the day.' (14.32-33)

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1 Genesis 1.28-29.

The key word here is *musakhar*, translated above as 'dispose'. It is sometimes taken to mean that human beings have a right to do whatever they want and indeed the earth is their property, as is also indicated by the word *kabash* in the Hebrew Bible, translated as 'conquer' in the verse quoted above. But deep reflection on the Arabic word *musakhar* in various contexts shows us that it means that God makes the earth in such a way that human beings can direct it in their interests; as an animal may be tamed, the earth is also set for man to be tamed by him. The point of the verse is not to order humans to make use of the earth in any particular way, but only to inform humans that the earth has been created in such a way that humans can make use of it and utilise it. How it should be made use of is set out and elaborated on in other concepts discussed in this paper and in various other divine orders about what is permitted and forbidden.

Here we might merely suggest that it was the dominance of naturalism and superficial forms of egoism and utilitarianism that were the true cause of the crisis rather than the teachings of Christianity. The main problem with religious world-views in relation to nature is not the notion that the earth was created for human beings and thereby has lost its intrinsic value. The idea of the creation of nature and other things for humans does not by itself remove the possibility that nature has its own intrinsic value. As we know, Aristotle takes the virtues, like temperance and courage, to be valuable for their role in achieving happiness, but at the same time he holds that they have intrinsic value.

Nature is valuable intrinsically because it is a form of God's manifestation, but it is also valuable because of its role in the perfection of human beings. Nature is the place of seeing the most important manifestations of God like the sun, stars, the moon, and human beings themselves. Serious crises in the environment would be harmful for God's purpose of nature because it will result in damaging His signs and consequently in preventing people from seeing Him in the mirror of nature. God says: 'Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who possess intellects.' (3.190)

Humans are permitted to utilise the environment and resources without wasting and causing harm to creation. Human prosperity depends on how we use the resources endowed to us by God. How do we preserve pure and fresh air by controlling and minimising air pollution? How do we maintain productivity and the fertility of oil by reclamation and restoration of land damaged by mining operations and operations of various other

industries? How do we maintain purity of water resources by prevention of water pollution? Ecological systems established by God provide water and food to animal and plants, filter pollutants, assimilate waste, pollinate crops, maintain a genetic library through biodiversity, preserve and regenerate soil, operate the hydrological cycle and maintain the gaseous composition of the atmosphere. The natural and balanced manner in which they work guarantees the survival of human, animal and vegetative life on earth. Disorder in this natural order can become a cause of the destruction of life. As the holy Qur'an proclaims, a balanced natural environment is a great favour of God for human beings. 'God has given you (mankind) power on earth and appointed therein a livelihood for you.' (7.10) God has made 'earth a resting place, sky a canopy and water from the sky and by it provided fruits and sustenance for you (mankind).' (2.22)

As stated in the Holy Qur'an, '... created for you (mankind) all that is in the earth.' (2.29) God has made this universe subservient to mankind and has taught man methods of using it for his needs based on the principle that man should always act justly and moderately and that man is accountable for his deeds. The holy Qur'an says: 'He is the one who created you from the earth and settled you upon it so that you might husband it.' (11.61)

Islamic teachings include conservation of the environment, respect for creation, protection of the natural order and avoidance of all wasteful activities which may cause injury or harm to the environment. Earthly resources such as land, water, air, minerals, flora, fauna and forests are made available by God to humans and other living creatures but there are ethical constraints on their use by human beings. We may use them but in such a way as not to upset the ecological balance established by God and not to compromise or pre-empt the ability of future generations of living creatures to meet their needs from these resources.

Balanced order and harmony

The order and harmony *(mizan)* prevailing in the workings of the universe and the precise laws governing the universe are based on justice and wisdom.[2] As we can understand from verses such as (7.31), our

2 For the significance of the concept of *mizan*, see commentaries of the Qur'an on the verse 55.7-9.

utilization of the environment and natural resources must be measured and balanced and without wasting or causing harm. One of the great sins in Islam is *israf* or wasteful consumption. Another sin is *tabdhir* (squandering). These two concepts are brought into play to moderate human behaviour. The Qur'an states: 'do not squander in wantonness. Lo the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils and the devil was ever ingrate to his Lord.' (17.27)

The superiority of human kind over other living beings does not imply vesting of absolute authority and ownership but invests humans with a moral responsibility in safeguarding God's creation.

Avoidance of corruption

God has condemned disorders, disharmony and unjust use in which plants, animals and natural resources are destroyed. In relation to the disorder of the environment the real problem is not subduing the heavens and the earth but the immoderation, unlawful control and excessive, rash and haphazard utilisation of earthly resources without caring for the environment and causing disintegration of the system of the environment, harm to human life and disorder and mischief. If men submit to divine laws and obey them, it will help solve the problem of the environment. The holy Qur'an says that to follow carnal desires causes corruption: 'And should the truth follow their lower desires surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have been corrupted.' (23.71) The holy Qur'an says: 'And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded (against evil) We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they rejected it, so we overtook them for what they had earned.' (7.96) 'Corruption has appeared in the land and in the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought.' (30.41)[3]

Thankfulness to God

There is also the concept of thanking God or being grateful to Him *(shukr)*. Thanking God means to use divine gifts in a responsible way and

3 See also the verse (2.205) with regard to man's efforts on land to make mischief on earth and to destroy crops and cattle. See also the verses 2.60, 7.85, 29.36, 28.77 and 26.151-152.

to protect and preserve God's bounties and favours to mankind on earth. Use of natural resources without regard to the environment is ingratitude to God.

Respect for signs of God

The universe and all its wonders discovered and undiscovered to date are worthy of respect as signs of God. God's signs are present in all natural phenomena namely,'succession of night and day','in the water that comes down from the sky giving life to the earth after it had been lifeless','in the change of the winds','in the mountains towering above the earth', 'in the hives of the bees and the flight of the birds','in the wonder of the seed', and 'in the springs that gush forth from within the earth.'[4] Islam emphasises the need to live in harmony with nature rather than work against nature.

750 verses in the holy Qur'an exhort us to reflect on nature, study the relationship between living organisms and their environment and to make best use of human reason and intelligence to maintain the balance and proportion God has built into creation and the environment. It is important to include environmental considerations in all our actions, individual and collective, as a major obligation.

Means of closeness to God

The natural environment is valuable intrinsically because it constitutes the signs of God and God's manifestation through the sun, stars, moon and all the things in the universe. It is valuable because it plays an important part in the perfection of human beings. The signs of God are manifestations of the divine attributes and names and enable mankind to witness the glory and majesty of God and remind him of God's presence in creation and the Day of Judgement. It provides for human beings a means to achieve the goal of closeness to God by the discharge and fulfilment in the manner

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4 It can be understood from the Qur'an that all creatures living in the air, sea or land live a social and individual life like us and all life is subject to the plan and will of God: 'No creature is here on earth nor a bird flying with its wings but they are nations like you.' (6.38) Also see verse 40.57.

taught by God of the duties and responsibilities of its proper utilisation and conservation. Damage to the environment constitutes destruction of the signs of God.

Eternal life

One problem which is worthy of consideration is that arising from certain interpretations of religious teachings about the importance of the afterlife or hereafter. Attention to the afterlife is sometimes taken to mean that nature is of no importance and can be mistreated with impunity; for according to religions, the real home of the human being is not the natural world where he is only a traveller and which he must soon leave. As this world was created only for passing from it to the final destination, the natural environment is only a station on the way and living here, in comparison to the afterlife, is not real living. Reference is also made to the Quranic verse which says: 'The life of this world is nothing but diversion and play. But the abode of hereafter is indeed life, had they known.' (29.64) According to this type of thinking, human beings are only obliged to pay attention to the beatific vision or salvation by taking the benefits from the world without paying the costs for the use of nature. Some people, whether in Christianity or in Islam, have taken this view of nature and devalued it because of their interpretation of its status in comparison to the afterlife.

We would like to explain the implications of the religious view of human life as a journey, and of the earth as a station on the way, by citing a Shi'ite narrative where our responsibility for keeping the earth safe for the life of future generations is also affirmed. According to a Shi'ite tradition, the human being must have a twofold attitude to his earthly life. Imam Hasan (a.s.) says: 'Be in the world as if you would live in it forever, and for your afterlife be as if you would die tomorrow.'[5] First, man must keep in mind that he is a pilgrim in this world, a sojourner, and this is not his final destination. This view in turn has two important implications for the environment: (1) simple living is appropriate, and (2) one must return the keys of this temporal residence to the real owner when we check out from this world. The human being is a traveller and this idea can be interpreted

5 Noori, H (1408 AH), *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, Mouassisat Aalul-Bayt, Qom, Vol. 12, p. 58.

as meaning that since he is not a permanent resident in the world he is a tenant and not an owner, and as such he cannot do whatever he wishes with the property of another. 'Look! To God indeed belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.' (10.55)

There are different rules for the tenants which they must take into account. They have responsibility for each action they do here. It is not the human individual who determines the rules for the tenant, but it is God who must determine the rules for using the earth. Indeed, the salvation of human beings is partly related to their behaviour in the earth where they are His *khalifah* (vicegerent). The concept of vicegerency implies that one must not damage the earth, the property of the true Sovereign; rather, the vicegerent has an obligation to good stewardship, taking the burden of caring for the earth on behalf of God. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says: 'God has sent Adam to make the earth flourish by the help of his offspring.'[6]

If it is the case that the final end of the human journey is to reach nearness to God, then how it can be achieved by damaging the earth and being at war with God's manifestations? If the way station was the property of another person instead of God, or we were not supposed to find our salvation near to God, then it would have been acceptable to do in the earth whatever we liked or what would satisfy us. Those who deliberately or by negligence disturb the environment are not the friends of God and His followers.

The Landlord of the earth has promised to punish us if we damage the earth and make it impossible for other generations to live in it. But He also will ask us about extravagance, even in what we are allowed in making use of the earth. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says that God will ask you about the permitted uses of earthly goods and will punish you in the forbidden uses of it.[7]

The other dimension of the metaphor of travel is taking life here in a simple way. Since this planet is only a way station, the best thing that a traveller can do is to live simply in his temporal home and not be extravagant in food, drink and other usages of the environment. One should travel light. Regarding the nature of the trip we must live here very simply because engaging in the use of material goods which can be found here prevents us from paying attention to our real and final life.

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6 *Nahj al-Balaghah*.

7 Kulayni, M (1365), *Al-Kafi*, Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, Tehran, Vol. 2, p. 459.

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says: 'Those who live simply have salvation.'[8] This simple living, if considered in depth, will be one of the main remedies for ecological crises. Good travellers in the way of salvation are those who have a light hand on nature, and who simply pass the way station to the final end. Secondly, we come to explaining the other part of the narration: 'be in the world as if you would live in it forever.' This means that we must pay attention to the earth, and try to do our best in making the surrounding environment better. Imam 'Ali (a.s.), praising the earth, says that it is the only means that we can use for our eternal bliss.[9]

It is obvious that without using the goods of this world, which in turn may affect the environment, we cannot live here and in consequence not do our best for salvation. The Prophet (peace be with him) says: 'Without bread we cannot pray.'[10] Imam 'Ali (a.s.) takes the good home and the good body, which in turn depend on the good environment, to be some of the key factors for achieving happiness.

Using Aristotle's terminology, these goods of the world are external goods for salvation. Internal goods are rooted in our soul, like temperance and courage. So whatever damage you inflict on the earth, the result prevents humanity from access to the external factors of happiness. Poverty and the lack of water, or the desert, for example, make very difficult situations for humanity, so that external goods for happiness are lost.

The meaning of the creation of the world for the human being is that he has been allowed to use the external goods in his journey to the extent needed to achieve salvation, and this level of the use of nature is free for him and is allowed already. This can be taken as a natural human right. Certainly Islam and also Christianity have some rules and prescriptions for using external goods, but unfortunately most of them are not articulated in a good manner that is suitable for our current situation. Indeed, religious scholars must ask new questions of the religious texts and articulate their replies in an appropriate way. Future generations are in some sense a continuation of ourselves, so it seems that we will be continued through them to live in the earth and so we must do our best to preserve the resources of the earth for future generations, for our future life.

Nature is never condemned in our traditions and the word *dunya* (world) does not refer to nature, instead it refers to our approach to it. What

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8 Tabarsi (1412 A.H.), *Makaarim al-Akhlaaq*, Sharif Razi, Qum, p. 440.

9 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Dar al-Hijrah, Qum, p. 493.

10 Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 5, p. 73.

is bad is being intensively interested in worldly or material pleasures or worldly goods. Nature is a sign of God and is a means to go further and reach God; so restricting our attention all the time to see the signs and neglecting the meaning after them is not acceptable. So, although nature is not evil, attachment to it and forgetting the afterlife—which is what is meant by divine references to *dunya* and *worldliness*—is evil.

In conclusion it is through life in this temporary world that salvation in the hereafter is achieved. So the concept of being a traveller through the world means in the words of the second holy Imam of the Shi'a, 'be in the world as if you would live in it forever and live for your afterlife as if you would die tomorrow.' The two important implications for the environment are that first one should live in a manner which is as simple as possible within the era in which one lives. Since this earth is a way station, the traveller should live with simplicity in the temporal home and not be lavish and extravagant in the consumption of material and physical objects and all the bounties of the natural environment. We must at the same time pay attention to the earth and make the best efforts to nurture and conserve the environment. Secondly, one must return the keys of this temporal residence to the real owner when we check out of this world having fulfilled all the obligations of a tenant of God and having complied with the rules made by God for using the earth and all its bounties. Using Aristotle's terminology the environment constitutes the external goods for salvation while the internal goods are the good qualities of our souls. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says that God will ask you about the permitted uses of earthly goods and will punish you as regards the forbidden uses of earthly goods.[11] We are accordingly accountable to God for the use of earthly goods. Sepehri, a contemporary Iranian poet, says: 'Those who lived at the head of the stream understood water; they did not muddy it, let us too not muddy it.'[12]

We as human individuals must have two eyes: one for seeing the afterlife and working for the sake of it, and another for seeing this world and working to conserve it.

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11 Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2, p. 459.

12 Sepehri, Suhrab (1378), *Hasht Kitab*,: Tahuri, Tehran, p. 345.

Significance of earth and sustainable use of land

Earth is privileged because the best of God's creation populate it. God has created on the earth all things necessary for survival of mankind. As stated in the verse (2.36), 'there is on earth a habitation and provision for a fixed time (for human beings).'

Earth has sacred nature. It is a purifying agent and the means of purification of dry ritual ablution *(Tayammum)*. The earth is a place of prostration of humans to God. It is also the final repository of the human body, i.e. in the grave. Earth is subservient to man but it is not to be overexploited or abused. It has rights over us just like the trees and wildlife living on it.

Protected zones

The Prophet established inviolable protected zones, in which resources were to be left untouched for the greater good of society and sustainable use of fertile land, forbidden areas around wells and water sources to protect the ground water and underground water table, and protected zones to protect wildlife and forestry where grazing and woodcutting was restricted and certain animal species were protected. He emphasised the importance of making unused land productive by planting trees, sowing seeds and irrigating dry land.

From the Islamic viewpoint, planting a tree is worship so a special prayer should be recited. Cutting the tree is forbidden. The Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.a.s) said: 'Do not cut down a tree except you are compelled to.'[13] Before battles, he always gave instruction to his soldiers not to harm women, children, the elderly, and those who surrendered, nor to destroy farms and gardens. From these instructions we can conclude that a lot of importance was given to safeguarding farms and gardens particularly during battles as well as in other times. The holy Prophet said:

> There are six things that will be useful for the believer even after his death: a child who asks God's forgiveness for him, a book that is left by him, a tree that he plants, a well that he

13 Hurr Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, Vol. 11, pp. 43 and 44.

digs, a charity to which he gives, and good conduct that he establishes and in being acted after him.[14]

Whoever plants a tree then a human or a creature of God eats its fruit, it will be considered as a charity and almsgiving for him.[15]
Whoever irrigates a tree or banana it is as though he has given a drink to a thirsty believer.[16]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said:

Farm and plant, so I swear by God that there is not any action more lawful and better than it.[17]
The best action is the farm.[18]
The greater alchemy and elixir is the farm.[19]

Significance of water resources

Water is a gift from God and a source of all life on earth. The word '*ma*" (water) is used in the Qur'an about sixty times. For example, the Qur'an says: 'And We have made of water everything living.' (21.30)[20] The Qur'an (24.45) also states that God created every animal that goes on its belly, on two legs and on four legs, of water. Water and the sea was the environment within which the prototype of all living matter originated. Of all the different types of existing or conceivable liquids only water has the peculiar properties necessary for the emergence of life. Protoplasm which is the physical basis of every living cell, whether in plants or animals and represents the form of matter in which the phenomenon of life is manifested, consists overwhelmingly of water and is dependent on water.

Water is the invaluable favour of God. Life is borne out of water and without water life cannot exist. All living things depend on water.

14 *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 44.
15 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 567.
16 Hurr Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, Vol. 12, pp. 25.
17 *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 5, p. 260.
18 *Ibid.*
19 *Ibid.*
20 See also verses 56.68-70 and 22.5.

Without water land becomes barren. The Qur'an in the verse (2.164) refers to water that God sent from the sky thereby reviving the earth after its death. Water plays a critical role in sustaining life on earth and reviving the fertility of land. One needs to reflect on God's system of continuous supply and proper distribution of water on earth and in the air.

Water is necessary for ablution (*taharah* or religious cleanliness). *Tayammum* or dry ablution is only permitted for religious cleanliness in the absence of water.[21] As stated in the verse (8.11), one reason that God sends down water from the sky is to purify us (human beings).

Water should be protected from all forms of pollution including industrial and toxic waste and poisonous and toxic materials. The Holy Prophet discouraged the waste of water or unnecessary use of it at all times and even during ablutions. Even on the bank of running water, e.g. stream or river, water should not be used unnecessarily. Islam does not permit anyone to pollute water. One is not allowed to urinate or pass faeces in water or to take a bath in standing water. Let us end this part with a *hadith* from the Prophet Muhammad:

> There are three things which cause the brightness of the eyes: to look at greenery, running water and the beautiful face.[22]

Conclusion

In the light of the enormous life-threatening impact and devastating effects of global warming and climate change on all aspects of human life and habitation on earth and damage to the physical environment and the natural resources from irresponsible human activity, it is of critical concern that humanity develops suitable responses to address and deal with the environmental concerns of the world today. This involves developing an appropriate moral perspective and outlook, as well as the social and economic policies at national and international levels to implement the package of required measures to safeguard and conserve the environment. This paper has tried to show the great importance Islam attaches to the balanced utilisation of the bounties of God on earth, including the environment and highlights environmental protection and conservation

21 See verse 5.6.

22 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 1291 and *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 3, p.129.

as part of the religion's core faith principles and traditions. In a modest way, it shows how the Islamic religious tradition offers spiritual resources by way of core concepts such as the relation of human beings to God, our Lord and Creator, our responsibility to God as the vicegerent of God and trustee and channel of God's grace on fellow creatures, and our accountability to use but not to abuse and waste the environment and physical world and preserve the balanced order and harmony in creation, our responsibility not to cause corruption in the natural order and to thank God and respect the signs of God and thus seek closeness to God; and our duty as travellers and tenants of God, passing through this earth as a way station en route to the hereafter, which come into play to remind us and highlight our responsibility for safeguarding and preserving the natural world and the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: AN ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

Gholam Reza Raeisian

One of the most important problems in today's society is the crisis of the environment. It would appear that the root of this problem goes back to the relationship of the human being to him/herself and to nature. To achieve personal benefits, pleasures and enjoyment it seems that humankind has decided it can use nature in such manner as it wishes and likes. But if we regard nature in this manner it will be very harmful to both us and the environment. In this present century we are now beginning to see some of the detrimental effects of this perception. It seems that the best way to preserve and protect the environment from destruction is to popularize and establish the religious perspective on the relationship between humans and nature. We should refer to the instructions of the divine religions and teach people, especially the young and children, so that they can learn how to use the natural phenomena in a more responsible way. In this paper, I will try to present the viewpoint of Islam regarding this subject by highlighting some of the Qur'anic verses as well as some Islamic *hadiths* in this regard. The paper consists of three parts: (i) nature from an Islamic viewpoint; (ii) humanity from an Islamic viewpoint; and (iii) instructions and recommendations.

Nature from an Islamic viewpoint

In the Qur'an, which is the most important source of knowledge and instruction in Islam, there are more than 750 verses related to natural phenomena. For example, there are many cases in which God takes oath by some of them, such as: 'the dawn' (89.1) and 'the fig and olive' (95.1). It should be noted that fourteen chapters of the Qur'an have been named after animals and other natural phenomena like: 'The Cow', 'The Cattle',

'The Thunder', 'The Bee', 'The Ant', 'The Daybreak', 'The Sun', 'The Night', 'The Fig' and 'The Elephant'.

In numerous verses, the Qur'an states that all the natural phenomena have awareness of God and glorify God:

> And there is not a thing but that it glorifies Him with His praise but you do not understand their glorification. (17.44)
> Whatever exists in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of God and He is the Mighty, the wise. (59.24)[1]

In one verse the glorification of God by thunder is mentioned: 'And the thunder declares His glory with His praise.' (13.13) Two verses mention that the mountains and the birds along with the Prophet David glorified God: 'And We made the mountains and the birds to celebrate our praise along with David.' (21.79 and 38.18)

In some verses the natural phenomena are specified as divine signs stating the knowledge, the wisdom and the power of God, such as:

> Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men and the water that God sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand. (2.164)[2]

There are some verses which invite mankind's attention to the resurrection of nature following the rain and to the creation of the heaven, the earth and the alternation of the night and the day and also point to how God is able to bring about the Resurrection, e.g:

> And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells: most

1 See also verses 24.41, 17.44, 59.1, 61.1, 57.1, 64.1 and 62.1.

2 See also verses 3.191-192, 6.97, 6.99, 14.32-34, 16.10-16, 31.31, 35.12 and 13, 42.32-35, 45.3-6, 51.20 and 55.19-25.

> surely He who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead surely He has power over all things. (41.39)[3]

Some verses state that natural phenomena have diverse benefits for human beings, like the rain which provides water to drink and causes different fruits to grow and provide herbage for the animals. And the sea is subservient so that man may eat fresh flesh from it and bring forth from it ornaments.

There are some traditions that recommend that Muslims should plant, farm and dig wells. This shows that these activities are regarded by Islam as being very important in human beings' lives and these play a key role in the environment. Some of these traditions are set out below. The holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.s) said:

> There are six things that will be useful for the believer even after his death: a child who ask God's forgiveness for him, a book (knowledge) that he leaves behind after him, a tree that he plants, a well which he digs, a charity to which he gives, and good conduct that he establishes and is acted upon after him.[4] Whoever plants a tree then a human or a creature of God eats its fruit, it will be considered as a charity and almsgiving for him.[5]

Imam Sadiq (a.s) said:

> Farm and plant! I swear by God that there is not any action more lawful and better than it.[6]
> The best action is the farm.[7]
> The greater alchemy and elixir is the farm.[8]

Sanctity of water

In Islamic culture the earth and especially the water are very important. The word water is used in the holy Qur'an about 60 times. Water is the

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3 See also verses 46.33, 16.65, 17.98-99, 40.57-59, 50.9-11.

4 Hurr Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 2, p. 44. In another *hadith*, giving water to a plant is likened to giving a drink to a thirsty believer (*ibid.*, Vol. 12, p. 25).

5 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 567.

6 *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 5, p. 260.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

origin and the source of life (21.30). Water is pure and purifying (25.48). Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: 'Surely God made the earth pure as he made the water pure.'[9] A Muslim who wants to perform a prayer anywhere or to circumambulate the Ka'bah in Mecca should be ritually pure and to be ritually pure he needs to use water (or earth if water is not available) in a special manner. He needs to be ritually pure to touch the holy Quran as well. In some traditions the expression 'the flowing water' in the verse 67.30 is taken as an indication of the hidden Imam, al-Mahdi (a.s.). And also the expression 'the abundant water' in the verse (72.16) is taken as an indication of abundant knowledge and faith. These show the importance and sanctity of water in the Islamic culture.

Significance of earth

The earth is also important. Every Muslim in his prayer has to perform prostration *(sajdah)* on the earth, and he should use it in a special manner to perform the prayer if he could not find water or if using water is harmful. The earth is the origin of the human being. The Qur'an says:

> From it (earth) We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it will We raise you a second time. (20.55)
> God made the earth for the human being a cradle (resting place). (20.53 and 78.6)

The earth is the mother of the human. The holy Prophet (a.s.) said: 'Preserve the earth because it is your mother.'[10]

Such emphasis in the Qur'an on nature and natural phenomena shows the importance and the worthiness of them, but it does not mean that human beings should not use and dominate them. Indeed, God has created them in the way that man can benefit from them, subject, however, to instructions and guidelines expressed in religious sources. These will be discussed later. For example, the Qur'an says:

> And the earth, He has set it for living creatures. (55.10)
> He it is who created for you all that is in the earth. (2.29; 45.13; 31.20; 16.10-14; 22.65; 14.32-34)

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9 Hurr Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 1, p. 133.
10 *Nahj-al-Fasahah*, No. 1130.

In some verses the benefits of these phenomena for human beings in particular are mentioned:

> And He created the cattle for you, you have in them warm clothing and many (uses) advantages, and of them do you eat. And there is beauty in them for you when you drive them back home and when you send them forth to pasture. And they carry your heavy loads to places and lands which you could not reach but with distress of the souls, most surely your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful. And (He made) horses and mules and asses that you might ride upon them and as ornament, and He creates that which you do not know. (16.5-8).
> That We pour down the water pouring (it) down in abundance, Then We cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder, then We cause to grow therein the grain, and grapes and (green fodder) clover and the olive trees and the palm trees and gardens of thick foliage and fruits and herbage a provision for you and for your cattle. (80.25-32)

There are some Qur'anic verses and Islamic *hadiths* which state the spiritual or psychological benefits of the plants:

> And send down for you water from the cloud; then we cause to grow thereby beautiful and delightful gardens. (27.60; 50.7; 22.5)

The holy Prophet (a.s.) said:

> There are three things which cause the brightness of the eyes: to look at the greenery, the running water and the beautiful face.[11]

In Islamic culture, nature and natural phenomena are important, worthy and sacred. By reflecting upon them as signs of God and manifestation of the divine attributes and names, human beings can understand and discover God's majesty and lordly unity and remember the Day of the Resurrection. In addition, man can use nature and natural phenomena in his physical as well as spiritual life. Every Muslim in his

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11 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 1291, and *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 3, p. 129.

prayer and sacred rites is familiar with nature because in his ritual ablution he uses water and he prostrates on the earth and for the determination of the time of the prayer and the direction of Mecca he observes and seeks the aid of the sky and the position of the sun.

Humanity from an Islamic viewpoint

Here I will not present the Islamic viewpoint on all aspects of human beings but only focus on the specific aspects which are related to the current subject. From an Islamic point of view, the human being is the vicegerent of God on the earth (2.30; 6.165; 35.39). When we say that the human being is vicegerent of God and He has made subservient to him whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, it does not mean that he can use them as he wishes without any limitation. As the vicegerent and representative of God on earth he has to be responsible and accordingly subject to God's commands to cultivate the land and construct towns and cities in which to live. The holy Quran says:

> He is the one who created you from the earth and settled you upon it so that you might cultivate it and construct towns. (11.61)

As a vicegerent of God, human beings should follow God's instructions and commands and behave according to God's will and consent. There are some who attribute the destruction and crisis of the environment to divine religions, and argue that religious doctrine that introduces the human being as a vicegerent of God permits human beings to act as they wish. In my view this is not so, because the very same religions have also provided instructions and enjoined man to act according to them. Moreover, the crisis of the environment has manifested itself in the last two centuries but this doctrine of vicegerancy of God dates to the advent of divine religions.

The guidance of God is set out in the holy Qur'an. The holy Qur'an states that God has created men for worship (51.56). It is in the light of the worship and through worshipping God that they achieve proximity to God and come near to God. Nearness to God has been sought by the infallible Imams. For example, Imam Sajjad (a.s) says:

> My God, so make us travel on the roads that arrive at thee and set us in motion on to the paths that nears to reaching thee! (The whispered prayer of the Devotees)

God has created nature for human beings so that they can use it to achieve nearness to God. So to reach that supreme goal he should observe the rights of fellow human beings and present and future generations to use the resources of nature. Nobody is permitted to use nature in a manner that tramples on another's rights. Natural phenomena have rights as well. So to be the vicegerent of God limits and restrains the behaviour of human beings. The main cause of the destruction of the nature is not its domination or subjugation but failure to observe the moral principles for the appropriate use of nature. If human beings submit to divine law and obey it, it will help to solve environmental problems. The holy Quran says that the result of following carnal desires is corruption:

> And should the truth follow their low (carnal) desires surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have perished and been corrupted. (23.71)

According to the Quranic verses, there is a close relationship between the action and the behaviour of man and natural phenomena, i.e. good actions and behaviour have a positive effect on nature and bad actions and behaviour have a negative effect on it. The holy Qur'an says:

> And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded (against evil) We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they rejected, so we overtook them for what they had earned. (7.96)

Instructions and recommendations

As highlighted in the two previous sections, natural phenomena are signs of God and manifestation of His divine attributes and names. They are important and worthy and are created for man so that he can utilize them to achieve his supreme goal, i.e. to obtain nearness to God. Such use and outlook requires responsible behaviour. Moreover there are specific

instructions, recommendations and guidance in the religious sources which guide human beings as to how to use nature and natural phenomena. We can categorize these instructions into two main groups:

—I General instructions
—II Particular instructions

I General instructions

I. 1 To observe purity and cleanliness

Purity and cleanliness are very important in Islam. Prescribed prayer is most important in Islam but without ritual purity (which is a precondition for prescribed prayer) such prayer would be void. There are three words which have the same meaning 'The Most Holy' *(Quddus)*, 'The Purified' *(Muthhar)* and 'The Pure' *(Tayyib)*. These all mean and connote purity. Purity in Islamic culture has two meanings: exoteric and esoteric. In the holy Qur'an, God is characterized by holiness (59.23; 62.1). The angel of revelation who strengthened Jesus is characterized by holiness as well (16.102; 2.87 and 253; 5.110). The holy Qur'an is characterized by purity as well (98.2; 80.14). The holy Prophet and his household *(Ahlul bayt)* (a.s.) are characterized by purity also (33.33). The word of God is introduced as a purified word (14.24). The life of the faithful and believer is a purified life: (16.97). The reason for being lawful or unlawful is to be pure or impure (7.157; 5.4–5). Paradise (Heaven) is characterized by purification (61.12). The holy Qur'an states:

> Surely God loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves. (2.222)

Surely those who are esoteric and spiritually purified are exoterically purified as well. In respect to cleanliness, the Prophet said: 'Surely God is clean and loves the clean, so clean your courtyard.'[12] He also said: 'Be clean as you can.'[13] He also said: 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.'[14] He also said: 'Surely Islam is clean so be clean, because nobody

12 *Nahj al-Fasaha*, No. 703.
13 *Ibid.*, No. 1182.
14 *Ibid.*, No. 3161.

can enter Paradise except Who is Clean.'[15] The Prophet told his wife: 'Surely the clothes glorify, (but) when they are dirty and unclean they do not glorify.'[16] Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: 'The tidy (clean) clothes eliminate the grief and the sorrow.'[17] This *hadith* mentions the spiritual effect of cleanliness on the human's soul. Thus, to be a believer requires one to be clean and purified.

I. 2 To observe trust

The believer is a trustee. The holy Qur'an states: 'Those who faithfully observe their trusts and covenants.' (23.8). God commands the believer to make over trusts to their owners (4.58). It is clear that nature is the divine trust and the trust of future generations in our hands so we should not use or utilize it in the manner that the next generation's rights are trampled on or in such manner that does not recognise the rights of the next generations.

I. 3 Being moderate and balanced

Moderation is recommended in the religious texts. The believer should be a moderate person in all aspects of his life including the use or utilization of nature. The holy Qur'an introduces the Islamic nation as a moderate nation (2.143). Describing the servants of God, the holy Qur'an says: 'Those who, when they spend are not extravagant and not miserly, but hold a just (balance) between those extremes.' (25.67) The holy Prophet said. 'The best of the affairs is the medium (median) one.'[18] He also said: 'Whoever is moderate he will not become poor.'[19]

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15 *Ibid.*, 612.
16 *Mizan al-Hikmah*, Vol. 10, No. 3898.
17 *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 3, p. 346.
18 *Nahj al–Fasahah*, No. 1481.
19 *Ibid.*, No. 2509.

I. 4 Thankfulness

One of the recommendations emphasised in the holy Qur'an is exhorting gratefulness and forbidding ungratefulness. The quality of gratefulness is not only oral and verbal but it should be practical as well. Real gratefulness is that one appreciates and uses the grace of God according to His will and consent; otherwise it will be ungratefulness. Among signs of ungratefulness are the destruction of natural phenomena and resources. This is forbidden and has a detrimental effect. In this regard, God says: 'And whoever changes the grace of God after it has come to him, then surely God is strict in punishment.' (2.211) 'Have you not seen those who have changed God's favour for ungratefulness and made their people to alight in to the abode of perdition?' (14.28) 'Eat of the good things we have given you for sustenance and be not inordinate with respect to them ...' (20.81).

I.5 To forbid extravagance

One of the dangers and perils that threaten society, and in particular the environment, is extravagance. The origin of this is greed and avarice. It is controlled by religious teachings. Exceeding bounds in using nature is extravagance, something that is forbidden in many Quranic verses, such as: 'And eat and drink and be not extravagant, surely He does not love the extravagant' (7.31); 'And do not squander wastefully. Surely the squanderers are the fellows of the Satans and the Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord,' (17.26- 27) and 'And He it is who produces gardens (of vine) trellised and untrellised and date palms and seed—crops of diverse flavours the produce of which fruits are of various sorts. And olives and pomegranates, like and unlike, eat of its fruit when it bears fruit and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping and do not act extravagantly surely He does not love the extravagant.' (6.141)

I. 6 To forbid damage

One of the most important legal principles is that nobody can damage and hurt human beings and other creatures. This is the content of the well-known *hadith* of *La zarara wa la zirara fi al-Islam* of the Prophet. According to this *hadith*, nobody can inflict any damage or harm to himself and to others.

I. 7 To forbid corruption

In many verses corruption is forbidden. It has a broad meaning and it is not limited to moral corruption only. So contaminating and destroying stock also constitutes corruption. The holy Qur'an says: 'Whenever they endeavour to fill the earth with corruption, slaughtering men and laying waste to their crops, generation after generation and God does not love corruption.' (2.205) and 'do not sow the seeds of corruption on earth after God has made it safe and secure.' (7.56 and 85)[20]

II Particular instructions

II. 1 To recommend to construct, build on and develop the earth

God created the earth and He has set it for living creatures (55.10). He it is who made the earth manageable and tractable (67.15). God has provided means for people's livelihood and so man should exploit the earth and construct in it. The holy Qur'an says: 'He is the one who created you from the earth and settled you upon it, so that you might cultivate the land and construct towns and cities in which to live.' (11.61). Imam 'Ali (a.s.) in his letter to his governor said: 'You should be more considerate towards the construction (physical development) of the land than the obtaining of the land tax.'[21] Elsewhere, he said: 'Fear God regarding His servants and lands, so you are responsible for the lands and the animals.'[22]

II.2 To observe the rights of animals

Animals are part of the environment, they have rights and human beings are responsible for them. In addition to the previous *hadith* from Imam 'Ali (a.s.), one may refer to a *hadith* from Imam Sadiq (a.s.): 'There are six rights for beasts that their owners should observe: He should not overburden that which has not the strength to bear and should not ride her while he is speaking and when stops he should begin to give her provisions and he should not brand and burn her and should not strike her face because

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20 See also verses 13.25; 16.88; 26.152; 27.48; 47.22.

21 *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Letter No.53.

22 *Ibid.*, Sermon 167.

she glorifies God and when passing by the water he should let her to drink.[23] Imam 'Ali condemned urinating in the water because there are animate creatures in it.[24]

II.3 To forbid harming animals and birds

There are some Islamic *hadith* that forbid harming animals and birds. The holy Prophet (a.s.) said: 'Whoever kills an sparrow without any reason God will question him about it on the day of Judgment.'[25] It is forbidden to hunt birds for fun.[26] There is a *hadith* which states that the holy Prophet (a.s.) said: 'A woman will be put in the hell because she imprisoned a cat till the cat died.'[27]

II.4 To forbid water pollution

Water has a key role in our life and other creatures' life as well, so Islam emphasises keeping it pure and clean. In addition to previous *hadiths*, one may refer to the following *hadith* from Baqir (a.s.), in which he said: 'Do not urinate in pure water!'[28]

II.5 To forbid to cut down trees

Trees have a key role in our life: they make the area green and the air pure and keep the earth from flooding. So we should plant trees and preserve them. According to Islam planting a tree is worship, so a special prayer should be recited. Cutting down trees is forbidden; the holy Prophet (a.s.) said: 'Do not cut down a tree except you are compelled to!'[29] Before battles, he always gave instructions to his soldiers not to harm women, children, the elderly, and those who surrendered and not to destroy farms

23 *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 6, p. 537.
24 *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 1 p. 240.
25 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 2224 and No. 2610.
26 See e.g. *Wasa'il al- Shi'ah*, Vol. 8, p.481.
27 *Nahj al-Fasahah*, No. 1559.
28 *Wasa'il al- Shi'ah*, Vol. 1, pp. 240 and 241.
29 *Wasa'il al- Shi'ah*, Vol. 11, pp. 43 and 44.

and gardens. From these instructions we can understand the importance of not destroying farms and gardens.

II.6 To forbid noise pollution

Speaking loudly is condemned. The holy Qur'an states that Luqman said to his son while he admonished him: 'Lower your voice, surely the most hateful of voice is braying of the asses.' (31.19). Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: 'One of the signs of the faith is the lowering of the voice.'[30]

30 *Ghurar al-Hikam*, Vol. 3, p. 453.

REFLECTIONS ON ISLAMIC BIOETHICS: A SHI'ITE PERSPECTIVE[1]

Mohammad Ali Shomali

Where does authority lie in Islamic bioethics?

Islamic bioethics is an extension of Islamic ethics, which is itself based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah and reason. Instead of reason, Sunni Muslims may refer to things like *ijma'* (consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy). For the Shi'a, *ijmaa'* and *qiyas* as such are not accepted, since they by themselves cannot prove anything. On the whole bioethical rulings of the Shi'a and Sunni do not differ fundamentally, especially in respect to those problems in which direct guidance has been received from the Qur'an and Sunnah. When problems become more speculative the positions are more likely to differ.

In Shi'a Islam, the determination of valid religious practice, including bioethical issues, is left to Grand Ayatollahs *(marji' taqlid)* who are the most qualified jurisprudents of each generation. They provide rulings on whether a given action is forbidden, discouraged, neutral, recommended or obligatory. It should be noted that every Ayatollah is required to refer directly to the main sources i.e. the Qur'an, the Sunnah and reason, and discover the Islamic teachings in every case. Although he studies carefully and respectfully the works of his predecessors, an Ayatollah must develop his own original understanding and must not follow any other Ayatollah, however great the other might have been. As said above, even consensus among people or scholars by itself is not a proof. This has given some kind of dynamism and vitality to Shi'a thought. Elsewhere I have written:

> Thus, for the Shi'a consensus in itself is not a proof. It only works when it leads to the discovery of Sunnah. Accordingly,

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1 Some aspects of Islamic bioethics are studied in M A Shomali, 'Value of Life in Islam' in *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue: Studies in Theology & Spirituality*, Melisende, London, 2004. Also at the conference Professor Celia Deane Drummond presented a paper 'Seeking Practical Wisdom: A Roman Catholic Approach to Genethics as a Case Study in Bioethics'. Her main thoughts can be found in *Genetics and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

> if Muslims today agree on a given subject, while a scholar has doubt about the Islamic judgement on that subject, he methodologically cannot say that because everybody says so, I also say the same. There have been many cases in the history where all human beings believed in the same way and later they found out that they were wrong, e.g. the earth being flat. It is only the Qur'an and the Sunnah that are unquestionably true and immune from any error or mistake. This approach grants a type of dynamism to Shi'i thought, so that every generation of scholars and even any single scholar is able and indeed is required to refer directly to the Qur'an and Sunnah and conduct his own original *ijtihad*, that is his investigation and independent judgement. *Ijtihad* has never been banned or closed in the Shi'a world. The Shi'a believe that the view of no jurist, however high his position, is immune from scientific questioning or challenge. Of course, as in any other discipline, every religious scholar needs to consult and examine carefully the works of his predecessors.[2]

What is the basis of Islamic bioethics?

If secular Western bioethics is mostly based on individual rights, what is the basis of Islamic bioethics? It has been suggested that 'Islamic bioethics is based on duties and obligations (e.g., to preserve life, seek treatment), although rights (of God, the community and the individual) do feature in bioethics, as does a call to virtue *(Ihsan)*.'[3]

I think it is true that Islamic bioethics is expressed primarily as duties and obligations. However, two points must be considered here. First, in Islamic law we try to infer our duties and obligations from the original sources. In other words, the emphasis in legal language is normally put on duties and obligations. However, there seems to be no doubt that Islamic legislation is all to secure our interests. God, the Almighty, does not gain anything if we obey Him. Neither does He lose anything if we disobey Him. It is only out of His wisdom and mercy that He has provided us with a legal system, including commands and

2 Shomali, *Discovering Shi'a Islam*, 6th Edition, 2007, pp. 40 & 41.

3 Abdallah S Daar and A. Khitamy, 'Bioethics for clinicians: 21. Islamic bioethics', *CMAJ*, January 9 2001.

prohibitions so that we know what benefits us or harms us in this world and the hereafter.

Second, it seems that most of the people who have written on Islamic bioethics have not made a distinction between Islamic law and Islamic ethics. Although it is certainly true that there is an absolute harmony and compatibility between the two, they may differ in their prescriptions because their aims and objectives are different. While Islamic law tries to state minimum requirements for perfection or happiness in both worlds which are manageable for the average or even lower than the average, Islamic ethics tries to show the people who have greater ambitions how to become more perfect and closer to God. Therefore, whatever is taken to be necessary or obligatory in Islamic law is certainly treated the same in Islamic ethics. However, there may be cases which are not prohibited in Islamic law and at the same time they may be condemned in the Islamic ethical system. Or there may be cases which are not compulsory in Islamic law but necessary from an ethical point of view. For instance, while idle chatter is not prohibited in Islamic law it is considered a waste of precious time and harmful to the spiritual development of the person, and thus ethically condemned. Another example is the night prayers (which should be performed after midnight and before dawn). Night prayers are highly recommended to all Muslims, but they are not mandatory in Islamic law. However, Muslim ethicists and spiritual masters normally hold the idea that they are necessary for those who aspire to new heights and strive for perfection. Elsewhere, I have written:

> So *Fiqh* mainly comprises basic and necessary laws whose obedience is required from all Muslims, and is considered the first step towards development. To commit oneself to the laws of *Fiqh* is not a difficult undertaking, as Islam itself is not a difficult religion. However, there always are individuals who observe the mandatory laws of *fiqh*, yet upon getting a glimpse of the Light, want nothing more than to fly to the Flame. For these enraptured souls, Islam has provided *akhlaq*. They then make mandatory upon themselves deeds which are highly recommended, or *mustahab*. In addition to performing these recommended tasks, they obey other laws of *Akhlaq*, and make unlawful upon themselves that which is not forbidden in *Fiqh*,

> yet somehow might be an obstacle on the way to the Light, to perfection.[4]

Therefore, if something like abortion is prohibited in Islamic law it is certainly prohibited in the Islamic ethical system as well. However, it is quite possible to think that while something like cloning may be permissible from a legal point of view, it may still be morally challenged.

Thus, to discover the basis of Islamic bioethics we need to reflect on both rulings of Islamic law and prescriptions of Islamic ethics and find out the benefits they try to secure and the harm they try to prevent. Moral considerations must not be overshadowed by the sheer legal approach, just as legal requirements cannot be compromised.

Dignity of man

Human beings have great status in Islam. In the Qur'an man is respected and honoured:

> And surely We have honoured the children of Adam, and We have carried them in the land and the sea, and we have given them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom we have created. (17.70)

Human beings can act as God's vicegerents on earth. The Qur'an says:

> And when your Lord said to the angels: I am going to place on the earth a vicegerent. (2.30)
> And He it is who has made you vicegerents (inheritors) in the land and raised some of you above others by (various) grades, that He might try you by what He has given you ... (6.165)

They are endowed with reason and free will and therefore are responsible for what they do. Therefore, it is only humans who bear the divine trust and can fulfill the goal of creation:

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4 M A Shomali, *Self-knowledge*, 2nd edition 2006, Jami'at al-Zahra, Qum, p. 34.

> We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely he is very unjust, very ignorant. (33.72)

This verse suggests that the main problems that man is faced with when exercising his freewill is injustice and ignorance.[5] Of course, God has provided human beings with the basic knowledge required to distinguish between what is (morally) good or bad:

> And inspired it what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it. (91.8)
> We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will). (76.3)

Man and the world

They can benefit from the rest of creatures and indeed every blessing of God including their own bodies and souls in a responsible way. We read in the Qur'an:

> And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect. (45.13)

> It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth ... (2.29)

> Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the blessings. (102.8)

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5 Injustice is a very broad concept and includes any act of disobedience to God or any act of harm to one self or others: 'Every person who breaks divine laws, has oppressed himself.' (95.61) If a person does not pray or fast then he has been unjust to himself. When a person beats someone or robs him of his money, he is initially doing a disservice to himself, then to the other person. Committing a sin is just like drinking poisoned water. Now if this person drinks poison, he is hurting himself. The same logic can be applied when he harms another being. The consequences of his ill acts would be his destroying the basis of his inherent God-given purity. He initiates hindrances on the way to his perfection.

Therefore, everything in the world which is at our disposal is both a gift and a trust. If it were just a trust we would not have permission to use them. Since they are gifts of God, we can use them. However, we cannot waste them or use them extravagantly as it is the case with any trust.

> And He it is Who produces gardens (of vine), trellised and untrellised, and palms and seed-produce of which the fruits are of various sorts, and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike; eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant. (6.141)
> O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters. (7.31)

In addition to this, the Qur'an tells us that we are supposed to make efforts to improve the conditions of the globe as much as possible:

> He brought you forth from the earth and has asked you to improve it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him; surely my Lord is Nigh, Answering. (11.61)

Therefore, we must be very careful about the way we treat nature, other human beings and ourselves.

Dignity of body and soul

We should always remember that in Islam there is a close link between body and mind, or between the material and the spiritual. In the same way that we need to look after our physical health we need to look after our spiritual health and vice versa. Dignity of man extends to his body and therefore there is no way to harm or treat with disrespect the human body, including one's own.

This dignity also extends to the period after death.[6] There are many rulings pertaining to the human corpse which all indicate the continuity of the respect to the human body even after the separation of spirit. For example, the human corpse must be properly washed, dressed,

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6 See Hurr 'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Section on *Diyat al-a'da*, Chapter 25.

prayed on and buried. The body must be buried in a respected place and the direction of Mecca must be observed. It is not allowed to dig the graves or unveil the buried body.[7] Autopsy is allowed, if necessary (say, when there is suspicion of murder), but it is certainly not encouraged by itself.[8]

According to many *hadiths*, performance of any act that causes death to a living person, like cutting off one's head, is forbidden, even if it is done to a dead person.[9] Indeed, it is considered to be worse since the dead have no power to defend themselves.[10]

Value of life

Life is sacred and one of the greatest gifts and blessings of God. Every moment of life has great value and is irreversible, therefore, must be appreciated and protected, even if it is of a poor quality. The guiding

7 In his reply to Question 1277 in *Ajwibat al-Istifta'at*, Ayatollah Khamenei does not allow to dig the graves of Muslims in order to exhume the bones for training purposes in the school of medicine unless there is a pressing need for the bones for medical purposes and it is impossible to obtain them otherwise. Reflecting on this reply we may conclude that if there are non-Muslims who do not mind to give or sell bones of their dead people Muslims must approach them.

8 Q1274: Is it permissible to carry out a postmortem examination to determine the cause of death in doubtful cases, e.g., we do not know whether it happened due to poison, suffocation, or something else? A: If getting to the truth hinges upon it, there is no objection to it. (Ayatollah Khamenei)

9 For example, 'Husayn b. Khalid says that Abu 'Abdillah (the sixth Imam, Imam Sadiq) was asked about a man who had cut off the head of a corpse. The Imam replied: "Verily, God has prohibited in respect of someone who has died the same thing that was prohibited when he was alive. So whoever does to a dead person what causes death to a living person must pay completely the *diyah* (blood money). I asked Abu al-Hasan (the seventh Imam, Imam Kazim) about this. The Imam replied: "Abu 'Abdillah told the truth. The Prophet spoke thus." I said: "So whoever cuts off the head of a corpse, or cuts open his stomach, or does anything else that causes death to the living must pay the *diyah* of a living person?" The Imam replied: "He must pay the *diyah* of an embryo in the womb of its mother before the spirit was created in it and that is 100 *dinars* (golden coins). The *diyah* of the embryo belongs to its heirs, but the *diyah* of this dead person belongs to him and not to the heirs." I asked: "What is the difference between them?" The Imam replied: "Verily, the embryo is something in prospect, whose benefit is hoped for (sought after), while the dead person is something which has expired and whose benefit has gone. Therefore, when his organs are severed *(muthlah)* after his death, the *diyah* belongs to him himself and not others. With this money, *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) will be performed on his behalf and other good deeds, such as giving alms, will be done." *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 101, p. 425, Hadith No. 5. See also *ibid.*, Vol. 48, p. 75.

10 See for example *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, Hurr Ameli, Chapter 25 of the section on *Diyat al-a'da*.

principle in Islamic medical ethics is mentioned in the following verse from the Qur'an, 'If anyone has saved a life, it would be as if he has saved the life of the whole of mankind.' (5. 32) According to this verse, saving life is an obligation and the unwarranted taking of life is a major crime. This verse prohibits murder, suicide, abortion and euthanasia and compels any form of saving life.

Treatment of the sick

Islam emphasises the importance of maintaining one's health and preventing illness, but when prevention fails, all efforts must be made to restore health. One way of saving life is to treat people when they become sick. It is a mutual responsibility of the sick and the physicians (or society in general). In other words, seeking treatment is a duty for the sick person and everybody in the society is obliged to help the sick in treatment. On the necessity of treatment, the Prophet said:

> O servants of Allah, seek treatment, for Allah has not sent down any illness without sending down its treatment.[11]

This is a sample of a set of narrations that make treatment mandatory when a treatment is available, and also if holding off this treatment would be harmful. On the other hand, healing people is considered as a sacred job. The physician must do his best to heal the ill, but at the same time he must know that the real healer is God. In the Qur'an, the Prophet Abraham is quoted as saying: 'And when I am sick, He restores me to health.' (26.80) Indeed, one of the names of God is 'the Healer' *(al-Shafi)*.

The physician must also treat the patient with respect and compassion. The oath of the Muslim doctor includes an undertaking 'to protect human life in all stages and under all circumstances, doing [one's] utmost to rescue it from death, malady, pain and anxiety. To be, all the way, an instrument of God's mercy, extending ... medical care to near and far, virtuous and sinner and friend and enemy.'[12]

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11 *Ibid.*, Vol. 59, p. 76.

12 'Bioethics for clinicians', p. 21.

Beginning of human life

Abortion

The general Islamic view is that, although there is some form of life after conception, full human life begins only after the ensoulment of the foetus. Most Muslim scholars including the Shi'a believe that ensoulment occurs at about 120 days after conception.[13] There is a minority that hold that it occurs at about 40 days after conception. Of course, as soon as the zygote settles inside a woman's body, it deserves a unanimously recognized degree of respect and it cannot be aborted. The Qur'an uses the word *haml* to describe pregnancy.[14] In Arabic, the term *haml* means to carry, and this starts when the zygote is implanted in the uterus and not before it. The late Ayatollah Khu'i said: 'The criterion in applying the [word] 'pregnant' for a woman is correct only after the settling down *(istiqrar)* of the sperm in her womb because just the entering of the sperm in her womb does not make her pregnant.'[15]

Thus, from the very beginning of the pregnancy its termination is prohibited and the zygote must be protected. The respect shown to the zygote at this early stage does not necessarily mean that it is a real or actual human being.[16] After pregnancy starts, the zygote is in a state of active potentiality to become a human being with the full genetic code of the human race in general and of the particular individual. As we saw above in the verse 23.13, the implantation of the ovum in the uterus constitutes the first stage of the creation of man. According to a *hadith*, Ishaq b. 'Ammar asked Imam al-Kazim whether it is permissible for a woman who fears pregnancy to drink some liquid to abort what is in her uterus or not. Imam replied: 'No.' Ishaq said: 'That is the zygote *(nutfah)*.' The Imam replied: 'Verily the first thing to be created is the zygote.'[17] However, it is only later when the spirit is created that it becomes a real human being. For this reason, the

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13 For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 101, p. 425.

14 See verses 19.22; 31.14; 46.15.

15 S M Rizvi, *Marriage and Morals in Islam*, cited from al-Gharawi, Mirza 'Ali, *Al-Tanqih fi Sharh-i al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa* (notes of the *fiqh* lectures of Ayatollah al-Khu'i), al-Adab Press, Najaf, 1988, vol. 7, p. 206; Rizvi adds that in 1987 he wrote to Ayatollah al-Khu'i asking him whether it is permissible to use a medicine or a device which prevents the fertilized ovum from implanting itself onto the wall of the uterus. The Ayatollah replied that it is forbidden to abort the zygote after its settling down, whereas [to prevent pregnancy] before that is alright *(ibid.)*

16 As we saw earlier in the discussion about animal life, the necessity of respect for life is not limited to human life.

17 *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 19, p. 15.

Shi'a jurists like the late Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei, Ayatollah Lankarani and Ayatollah Sistani declare that it is permissible to abort the foetus to save the life of the mother before the ensoulment. But after that, it is not allowed to sacrifice the foetus for the sake of the mother.[18]

In his famous medical work called *The Canon*, Ibn Sina studies the techniques of bringing the embryo out of the womb.[19] Although his discussion is medical in nature and not jurisprudential, he makes it very clear that such operations can only take place in clearly defined situations when there is no other option. In order to block the way for any misuse by those who may want to commit abortion, he asserts that such operations can be performed only in the following circumstances:

1. When the mother is too young and cannot bear pregnancy and she will certainly die during delivery. In this case, to save her life, the embryo must be taken out before complete growth.
2. When the mother's womb is hurt and extra flesh has blocked the way for the delivery. Such a child cannot survive the delivery and will die in her mother's womb.
3. The child has already died in the womb. In this course, efforts must be made to bring out the dead body of the child.

He adds if a mother has delivery pain for four days and the child is not delivered know that certainly the child has died and you must do your best to save the mother. Do your best to save the life of the mother and do not think that you may be able to bring out the child alive. The techniques that he mentions for removing the child basically involve either certain movements and dietary issues or taking some medicine.[20]

Death

Death consists in the separation of the soul from the body. However, the exact time of this cannot be known with certainty, like the time of

18 *Ahlam-e Pizishki* compiled by M Ruhani and F Noghani, pp. 107–125.

19 *The Canon of Medicine* (original title in Arabic *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*) is a book by the Persian scientist and physician Ibn Sina. The book was based on both his own personal experience and on medieval Islamic medicine in general, as well as traditional Persian and Arabian medicine. It is considered as one of the most famous books in the history of medicine and remained a medical authority for centuries.

20 Ibn Sina, *Qanun*, Section Three, p. 327.

ensoulment. Therefore, death is diagnosed by its physical signs. However, when there is a doubt maximum caution must be taken into account. It should be noted that there is a difference between reaching an irreversible state in which death becomes decisive and actually dying. Secondly, if a person still shows some vital signs, like a heart beat, and even if (this is really an if) we can scientifically know that his soul has departed the body, nothing must be done that people may take it as hastening one's death or a disrespectful act to human life.

Organ transplantation

This is practised in almost all Muslim countries. Three situations can be imagined here:

a) A donor is living and is willing to donate some organ. This is normally allowed, provided that such donation does not pose any danger to his own life. For example, a healthy person can donate one kidney to another person and still live reasonably. Indeed, this may become obligatory when it turns to be the only way to save a respectful life and is not going to put himself in an unbearable situation or harm him. One cannot donate any organ on which his life depends, like the heart or brain.[21]

b) Cadaveric donation: As said above, Islam has a high regard for the dead and this determines many religious and moral decisions regarding cadavers. However, many Muslim scholars have permitted cadaveric organ

21 Q1279: If a person is suffering from a fatal illness and doctors say he will die soon, is it permissible to remove certain organs from his body, such as heart, kidney, etc., before he is dead so that it can be transplanted in the body of another person?
A: If the removal of the organs from the patient's body leads to his death, it amounts to murder. Otherwise, there is no objection to it provided that it is done with the person's permission. (Ayatollah Khamenei)
Q1283: Since having a kidney transplant would improve the patient's condition considerably, there has been an intention to set up a kidney bank. This is bound to encourage people to donate or sell their kidneys willingly. Is it permissible to donate or sell one's body part by choice, whether it is a kidney or any other organ? And what is the ruling in emergency conditions?
A: There is no objection to the living *mukallaf* donating or selling his organs in order that the sick may make use of them provided that he will not be considerably harmed. Indeed, this becomes obligatory when it becomes the only way to save a respectful life, in case one is not going to put himself in an unbearable situation and it is not harmful for him.

donation, if the person has made this decision before his death or his guardian *(wasiyy)* approves that.[22]

c) Donation after brain death: This very much depends on whether to accept legally brain death as death or not. Therefore, it will be reduced either to a or b. Normally the Shi'a scholars like Ayatollah Khamenei, Ayatollah Bahjat, Ayatollah Tabrizi, out of maximum care for human life do not allow any transplantation that leads to the termination of life even in this state and even the donor has put in his will that after his death his organs can be given to those in need.[23]

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22 Q1280: Is it permissible to use the blood vessels of a dead person for transplantation in the body of another person who is ill?

A: There is no objection to it provided that it is done with the permission of the person in their lifetime, or with that of their guardian after their death, or when saving a respectful life is contingent upon it. (Ayatollah Khamenei)

Q1285: I have expressed my wish to donate my organs after my death. I was told that I should make a will in this regard and inform my heirs. Have I the right to do so?

A: There is no harm in making use of a dead person's organs for transplantation in the bodies of other people in order to save their lives or treat their illnesses. There is no objection to writing this in one's will. This ruling, however, does not cover those parts of the body, whose removal could amount to *muthlah* of the body itself, or severing them would violate the dignity of the dead according to the common view. (Ayatollah Khamenei)

23 Q1284: Some patients suffer from irreversible brain damage which results in the disappearance of all kinds of neurological activities associated with deep coma plus inability to respire and response to all motor sensory stimulations. In such cases it is not probable at all to restore these activities and the heart could only work temporarily by itself with the aid of a respirator. This condition, which is called in medicine 'brain death' does not continue more than a few hours/days. That is on the one hand. On the other hand there are other patients whose lives can only be saved by the transplantation of organs to them being taken from those who suffer from brain death. Is the use of organs taken from such patients for this purpose permissible? A: If the removal of the organs from the patient described in the question would precipitate his death, it is not permissible. Otherwise, if the removal of such organs is made with his prior permission, or the use of the removed organ is the only way to save a respectful life, there is no objection to it. (Ayatollah Khamenei)

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AYATOLLAH SADR'S VIEW ON THE ESTRANGEMENT OF ETHICS AND ECONOMICS

Hujjatu'l-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Hassan Agha Nazari

Introduction: history of ethics and economics

In the European universities of the 18th century, economics was taught as a sub-subject of ethics or moral philosophy. The most famous example of such teaching is that of Francis Hutcheson, the teacher of Adam Smith, of the University of Glasgow. According to Hutcheson in his *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy,* we can work out that his lectures were divided into two parts. The first dealt with virtues and the second with the law of Nature. The latter was further divided into three parts: private rights, economics, and politics.[1] According to this view, economics fell under the law of Nature (or jurisprudence) and the law of Nature itself fell under moral philosophy.

Smith was deeply influenced by the ideas of Hutcheson and, as a result, after his appointment as the professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow he followed a similar pattern to that adopted by his teacher. As Smith's student, John Millar, explained, Smith's course on moral philosophy included four parts: natural theology, ethics (published as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* first edition 1759), justice (published posthumously as *Lectures on Jurisprudence*), and finally, 'political regulations which are founded ... [upon] expediency, and which are calculated to increase the riches, the power, and the prosperity of the state' (and largely published as *The Wealth of Nations,* first edition 1776). For Smith, economics (or what he called political economy) was part of this grand scheme of moral philosophy.

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1 Ian Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995.

Estrangement of ethics and economics vis-à-vis methodology and fundamental assumptions

The estrangement of ethics and economics can be investigated from two perspectives: first, the positivistic methodology; second, the fundamental assumptions and axioms used in each field. Economists, who insisted on the necessity of using the methodology of positivism in the evaluation of economic theories, logically found no place for the value-laden propositions of ethics within such theories and thereby paved the way for the estrangement of these two fields of learning. Drakopoulos on the role of positivism in economics argued:

> Most economists today ... would agree that the claim of an economic theory free from values is essential in establishing the scientific nature of the discipline. A positive, value-free economics, in the sense of not relying on any particular set of value judgements or on any philosophical or psychological framework, is generally seen as ideal.[2]

This approach has crucially influenced important branches of economics such as microeconomic theory.[3] The methodology of John Stuart Mill and others, that defined what economic science does, was accepted more rigorously. Consequently, in practice, moral concerns were removed from economic texts. Positivism played a great role here. The positivistic methodological works of Robbins and Friedman did influence the profession and left a negative effect on the nature of economics as a moral science.[4]

In this manner, ethical propositions with value-laden concepts were removed from the realm of economics and propositions such as, 'It is good to work for the benefit of others,' 'Everyone should set aside a portion of their earnings to help others,' or 'It is good to invest in the education of children without guardians' were now considered outside the discourse of the science of economics. This is because positivism is not able to evaluate statements that have value concepts such as 'good' or 'should'.

Similarly, fundamental assumptions and axioms indicating that the

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2 S A Drakopaulos, 'Origin and Development of the Trend towards Value—Free Economics', *Journal of the History of Economics Thought*, 1997, pp. 19 and 20.

3 See *ibid.*, p. 124.

4 See Robbins, *The Nature and Significance of Economics Science*, Macmillan, London, 1935.

mere search for maximum personal benefit for rational human behaviour have led to the widening of the gap between ethics and economics. This is because according to these assumptions, economic theories are based solely on human behaviour that thinks about nothing other than its own benefit. It is in this light that Amartya Sen outlines the expository role of rationality with regards to the 'search for personal benefit' in the overall general balance and the [dictates of] Pareto optimality. Sen writes: 'Precedent setting rational behaviour that seeks maximization of self-interest makes for a behavioural analysis that is easier than taking into account less ordered assumptions.'[5]

In general, human economic behaviour, in both micro and macroeconomics, is based upon assumptions of material self-interest or other quantitative human qualities that are in line with such self-interest. According to this view, ethical behaviour such as good intent or sympathy or concern for public welfare cannot be used as axioms for scientific theories. To ignore such ethical behaviour is exactly the same as giving importance to quantitative and material self-interest and to be independent of any other human qualities.[6]

The source of the problem of the estrangement between ethics and economics from the perspective of Ayatollah Sadr

Naturally, economics evaluates human behaviour from its own vantage point and frames its theories in accordance with the basic motives that lie behind such behaviour. No doubt, self-love is one of the most basic motives and many other human motives spring from it. Considering this reality that man thinks about his material benefits and that his basic motive in the plane of economic interactions is self-love or self-interest, it is only natural that he would want to work towards maximizing his personal benefits. Hence that which is assumed by economic theorists is just this same economic behaviour that springs from individual self-interest in such a way that the basic assumption that is the basis of their theories is the search for the maximization of personal benefit. Hence the source of the problem is not that wanting good for others or co-operation with them is a socio-ethical behaviour that is not known by man and that man does not engage in such

5 Sen, 1987.

6 F Machlap, *Methodology of Economics* , Academic Press, London ,1978, pp. 216-218.

behaviour because of his ignorance. Rather, the fundamental source of the problem of the estrangement and disconnect between ethical behaviour and the teachings of economics must be sought in that thinking that sees personal self-interest as the criterion of rational behaviour. This thought can be summarized in the following: Whenever man as a social creature believes that life is just this limited life of the material world and any and all benefits or pleasures are just in this world, and goes on to put this thinking alongside his innate self-interest, then such a man cannot envision a goal or purpose other than personal self-benefit that is purely material. The economic behaviour of such a person will not be in co-ordination with the welfare of others. This is especially so because self-interest is the most basic and fundamental of innate characteristics and instincts and the other instinctual qualities such as self-preservation, want for pleasure and felicity, self-defence, and avoidance of pain are but branches and offshoots of the fundamental characteristic in question. Hence all human behaviour in its social modality is coloured by this innate self-interest or self-love. Under such conditions, man does not willingly accept to be put under duress or difficulty while taking upon the task of working for the benefit of others.

The truth is that in the existential makeup of man there is great potential for taking pleasure from different things—both material and spiritual—such as culinary delights, sexual satisfactions and contentment with moral values. These potentialities and dormant powers of pleasure seeking are not activated in a unified way in various situations. Rather, some of these potentialities, given the natural, social, and educational propensities of different people, are activated sooner than others. For example, the instinct for sexual gratification appears earlier in some people than other potentialities, but it must be noted that the essential self-interest or self-love is the basis for all of these potentialities and human behaviour is shaped by the potentialities that come to be actualized. The potential of a person could be such that he is able and willing to give his own food to somebody else because he takes pleasure from self-sacrifice and humanitarian aid, while the potential of another person could have developed in such a manner that he prefers himself over some other hungry man; precisely because his potential for altruism has not yet developed. But what is common here is that both of these potentials are based upon self-interest; so both the case of the first man who took pleasure from the ethical value and moral virtue of helping another man and also the case of the second man who chose to feed himself rather than another are based on the same reality while their actualization

of different potentials leads them to behave in different ways.

Hence whenever we would want men to have positive ethical behaviour towards their own kind, then we must change their perspective with respect to pleasure and benefit and we must bring expected behaviour to coincide with their innate self-interest. This innate self-interest then is able to guide and take to fruition all different types of human potentialities, but when life is defined just as this limited material living and pleasures are bound just to this physical realm, then the only way that man has in front of him is to find an income so that by it he may satisfy his personal inclinations and desires. While man is man and relegates life to this world only, he finds that self-love swells within him and gives direction to all of his social interactions. At one point in human history it was claimed that without resorting to the metaphysical and keeping entirely within the material, it was possible to change the nature of man such that he would no longer think of his own personal benefits but would rather think about the good of the society (as in Marxism). But this stage was quickly passed and the holders of such views and claims became aware that it was not possible to feel and believe that human life was limited to this world hereunder and at the same time to forget about one's own self-interest so as to work for the benefits of others.

Ayatollah Sadr's proposed solution

Recognizing the fact that human behaviour in its various social embodiments is affected by both rationality as well as emotion, Ayatollah Sadr tries to identify the motivating force that has an innate origin and is able to direct simultaneously both the rational and emotional behaviour of man such that ethical behaviour and altruism fall squarely within man's self-interest. By so doing, all the different types of human behaviour are motivated by individual self-interest and social benefit in a natural fashion. This proposal seeks to obtain the above goal by an internal change in the beliefs and convictions of man.[7]

Such a changed belief and conviction involves recognition of the hereafter and that the destiny of man in the hereafter is set according to how he lives this life in the here and now. The man who through his

7 Sadr, 1425 A.H./a, pp. 125-129; 1425 A.H./b, 31-37.

religious convictions about this material life comes to see this world as a passing stage leading to the otherworld and comes to understand how his actions here will affect his destiny is no longer able to align his social behaviour to the callings of only his own personal material self-interest—ignoring in the process his ultimate destiny in the other life. This is because such a religious belief which envisions a much broader scope for human thought and action cannot just stop at the initial stage of this world and refuse to see the certain relation and bond that this world has with the next.

Human self-interest and self-love is the most fundamental pillar upon which all human feelings and inclinations rest. But when the human intellect and awareness is expanded to include the hereafter, it calls human self-interest to actions and behaviour which combine both the benefits of this world as well as the benefits of the next. Without doubt the behaviour which guarantees the benefits of the afterlife is not the same as the selfish behaviour which brings about the acquisition of the material boons of this world. This religious belief gives such direction and purpose to the innate human self-interest that the realization of otherworldly benefits becomes necessary for every individual and comes to include humanitarian service as well as other social ethical acts. As a result, both human rationality and self-interest are so directed that in a natural way they work for individual and social betterment. Hence, thought, worldview, inclinations, and emotions grow together in a harmonious fashion. Keeping in mind such a man, now let us return to the original topic of our article.

Among economists, the common view is utilitarianism which considers man as a selfish creature. Hence it is only natural that such a man should be unperturbed by things such as the growing economic gap between classes, consumerism, pollution and the destruction of the environment because they do not affect his own personal self-interest. In contrast to this view, we can define man in a more balanced way. For despite the fact that he has certain instincts common with animals and that he is after his self-interest, man respects truth and honesty and gives importance to humanitarian efforts and the search for God.

The latter view does not imply that human beings are not after their personal benefit; rather, it means that they see their personal benefit to lie in line with honest behaviour and godliness. Hence we can define rational economic behaviour in two diametrically opposite ways: One, rational choice and behaviour is to arrive at the goal with the least expense

and the maximum efficiency. What is considered in this first model is the practical or actual achievement of the goal in sight with the least cost and risk. With regards to considering the different ways for getting there, the wider picture of human life and existence is not that important. Two, rational choice and behaviour revolves around the truth and validity of the goal as well as the means for achieving it. It does not allow an 'any means necessary' approach. Rather the means are thought out and in harmony with the religious belief.

From the above it is clear that the current economic theories with regards to supply and demand, market, balance, perfect competition, consumption, investment, etc, are based upon the first model and appropriate to the 'economic man'. In the case of the second model, the man of economics and the rational behaviour expected of him are different and warrant a different set of theories.

If economists were to take up the second model, then firstly, they would re-evaluate their methods. For instance they would not limit all economic behaviour to personal material benefit but would take into consideration social moral concerns. Secondly, they would not see rational behaviour to be equivalent to working for personal material benefit. Rather, they would hold rationality or rational behaviour to be balanced behaviour that is inclusive of both personal material benefit and the benefit of others.[8]

It must be noted of course that the quintessence of such fundamental changes is to be found in the axioms pertaining to the religious beliefs related to economic methodology and theory. If general education policies were to include religious teachings and faith in the Creator of this world and were to see the total being of humans to span from this world to the otherworld, then economists would not have ended up with such a narrow perspective and the prospect of economics would be something else altogether. Perhaps it is because of this claim that some economists have held that the assumptions of economics are unrealistic and have tended towards more ethical and value-laden statements or thought. We will try to summarize some of these thoughts here:

a) Grants economics: abstaining from selfishness is not to be irrational. On the other hand, as Frank Hahn says, 'The day that economics started to rely on rationality—a rationality that was defined as accurate calculations

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8 Sadr, 1401 A.H, pp. 30-50; Sadr, 1425 A.H/a, pp. 141-149; Sadr, 1979, pp. 317-334

and an ordered personality—was the day that it fell into error.'[9] Beyond these considerations, it is known that the job of an economic model is to correctly and meaningfully predict future phenomena. It seems that to assume a rational behaviour that takes into account self-sacrifice would give more meaningful results. It is for this same reason that the Boulding Optimum came to replace the Pareto Optimum, as it sought to include [subjective] inclinations into economic analysis—things which had been removed from it as they were seen to be non-objective value statements.[10]

b) Scientific research is based on assumptions that incidentally address value statements. Hence to hold that science is value-free and objective with respect to value statements is unjustifiable and incorrect. It is for this reason that Amartya Sen believes that separating economics from ethics has impoverished public welfare, just as an economics that is descriptive and predictive (or quantitative) has also done the same. If economics were to give more importance to ethical constructs—which inform human behaviour and rational thought—it could be more useful.[11]

Hence if one were to emphasise ethical thinking and reduce the 'sacredness' of both the idea of personal benefit and the notion of the economic man, there would be reason to be hopeful. Because in the last two centuries the indifference shown with respect to values has reached such intensity that it is not possible for there to be a retreat unless religion is brought into the arena. Stressing the perennial importance of religion in the moral history of man, Owen Chadwick says: 'other than the rare or fringe movement, the morality of mankind has never been divorced from religion.'[12]

In conclusion, the most efficient way to remove the distance between ethics and economics is to revive religious values and beliefs. When this is done the economic man and his behaviour would be in harmony with ethical social behaviour and economic theories would be able to cover the entire spectrum of human behaviour from economic to

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9 Fran Hahn and Martin Hollis, *Philosophy and Economic Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979.

10 See Robert A Solo and Charles W Anderson, *Value Judgement and Income Distribution*, Prager, New York, 1981.

11 Amartyasen, *On Ethics and Economics*, 1987, pp. 87-9.

12 Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 229-234.

ethical and individual to social. This being accomplished, the estrangement between ethical behaviour and economic behaviour in the current economic theories would come to an end.

BUSINESS ETHICS: A CATHOLIC VIEW

Catherine E Cowley ra

The subject given to me for my paper, *Catholic Business Ethics*, is ambiguous. There is a substantial amount of Catholic reflection on business activity, but whilst there are a number of ethical issues where one can identify *the* Catholic position, it is not so clear-cut when it comes to business. There are several reasons for this, and I shall highlight two. The first is that as Catholics we approach the discovery of the meaning of the world using two complementary means: faith and reason. The exercise of reason requires using such things as science, which in the business context includes economics and the social sciences. The Catholic tradition insists that faith and reason, faith and science, are complementary, not in opposition to each other. For the Christian, science is the same as it is for other people. There is no such thing as Catholic chemistry or Catholic mathematics. However, science is seen as having an additional purpose: that is, to understand God's work and lead it back to its source in God.

It follows, therefore, that human realities have a certain autonomy[1] and if we are to understand them, in this case, business, we will need to use economics and the other sciences which study this reality. This does not downgrade faith. 'Describing reality in the light of God is a basic theological discipline.'[2] Faith sheds new light, but it does not prevent the need to understand reality in all its complexity. Faith alone will not tell one, for example, how to balance the needs of employees with the expectations of shareholders, or how an executive's pay package should be structured. Reflection about business activity cannot be divorced from its

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1 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes* 36. All encyclicals cited are, unless otherwise indicated, from David J. O'Brien and Thomas A Shannon (eds), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Orbis Books, New York, 1999.

2 David F Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 4.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON SELF-PURIFICATION[1]

Mohammad Ali Shomali

There are two ways in which spiritual direction can be given by spiritual instructors: one is to have a common audience in mind and give general instructions that more or less can benefit everyone, and the other is to bear in mind particular conditions of an individual or a homogeneous group of people and give specific instructions. Focusing on the latter attitude among Muslim spiritual instructors, in this paper we will first study the significance of self-purification in Islam. Then we will refer to different approaches to self-purification. This will be followed by a break down of the process of self-purification. Finally five general instructions given by Muslim spiritual mentors will be introduced.

Significance of self-purification

In the Glorious Qur'an, after swearing eleven times, God emphasises the purification of the human soul as follows:

> [I swear] by the sun and its brilliance and the moon when it follows the sun and the day when it makes manifest the sun (and her beauty) and the night when it covers the sun and the heaven and Him who made it and the earth and Him who extended it and the soul and Him who made it complete, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He will indeed be successful who purifies it and he will indeed fail whoever pollutes and corrupts it. (91:1-10)

1 This paper includes mainly the ideas which were originally presented as two lectures on spiritual direction in the second and third Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue in July 2005 at Ampleforth Abbey and in July 2007 at Worth Abbey.

Purification of the soul is a prerequisite for closeness to God. Indeed, the whole point of morality and spirituality is to purify one's soul. It is only then that the soul starts shining, receiving and reflecting utmost radiation and light from God. If we want to meet God, Who is the Most Pure, then we need to achieve purity. It is impossible to be polluted and then try to go towards God.

We can understand from the Qur'an that the main task of all the Prophets and the aim behind all their endeavours in teaching the divine message was to help people to purify their souls. For example, referring to the Prophet Mohammad, the Glorious Qur'an says:

> Certainly God conferred a great favour upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error. (3:164)[2]

Different approaches to self-purification

In Islamic literature there are different ways in which the process of self-purification has been characterised as:

1. A combat with the self

According to this approach, self-purification is an internal battle against the enemy within. In a very well-known *hadith*, we read that once, in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad saw a group of his companions who had won a battle approaching. The Holy Prophet said:

> مرحبا بقوم قضوا الجهاد الاصغر وبقى عليهم الجهاد الاكبر! فقيل: يارسول الله، ماالجهاد الاكبر؟ قال صلى الله عليه و آله: جهاد النفس.

> 'Well done! Welcome to those people who have completed the minor struggle and on whom the greater struggle is still

2 See also verse (62:2).

> incumbent.'[3] [this translation does not complete what the Arabic says!]

The companions had defeated their enemies in a severe battle and had been prepared to give up the dearest thing to them, their life, to defend Islam. They were astonished and wondered what could be greater than that. The Holy Prophet replied: '*Jihad al-nafs*.' This means to struggle with your own self.[4]

To fight an internal enemy is the greater struggle because it is more difficult. When an enemy is found inside it is more dangerous and more difficult to defeat. An internal civil war is more difficult to face than war against an external foreign enemy on one's borders. It is much more difficult to expel someone who has occupied our house than to repel someone who is only outside it. An internal enemy knows all our secrets. He knows our weak points and our strong points and he knows exactly how to 'play' with us. An internal enemy is always with us and allows us no rest. So this is a very difficult and complex battle. Of course, despite all the challenges to be faced in this struggle, in the end it is not so difficult. God will guide and make it easy for those who sincerely want to win. It is very important that when we know something we must put it into practice. If we put our knowledge into practice, then God will give us knowledge of the things that we do not know. If we put into practice the small thing that we know, it will enlighten the path before us.

2. A medicine

Another approach is to consider spirituality as a kind of medicine for our soul or spirit. Spiritual problems are described as illness and so we need to treat ourselves with special medicines. We are patients in need of a cure, in need of medicine. Just like our bodies, our souls may also become ill. Unfortunately the most difficult sort of illness is when we suffer deep inside. In twelve verses, the Qur'an talks about a group of people who suffer from 'disease in their hearts'. This disease may be increased by God

3 There is an addition to the above *hadith*, which can be found in *Bihar al-Anwar* and reads as follows: 'The best struggle is to fight one's own self.'

4 *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 5, p. 12, no 3 and *Al-Amali* by al-Saduq, Session 71, p. 377, no 8. For an elaborate account of the subject, see Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Combat with the Self*, translated by Nazmina Virjee, ICAS, London, 2003.

because they do not want to be cured and insist on being ill. For example, we read:

> 'In their hearts is a disease and God has increased their disease.' (2:10)

The Qur'an also talks about hearts which are healthy and pure:

> 'Do not disgrace me on the day when people are revived, the day on which neither money nor children can help, except the one who comes to God with a healthy (pure) heart.' (26:87-89)

This is the prayer of the Prophet Abraham. In the verses (37:83 & 84), God informs us that this request was granted: 'Indeed, Abraham was among his [i.e. Noah's] followers, when he came to his Lord with a healthy (pure) heart.'

Thus, we can understand that having a pure and healthy heart is so important that someone like Prophet Abraham, the father of all monotheistic religions, asks God for it. Indeed, this is the only thing which will be useful on the Day of Judgement when neither children nor money will benefit us (26:88 & 89). In *Najh al-Balaghah*, sermon 338, Imam 'Ali says:

> 'One of the catastrophes that may occur is poverty, but more difficult and worse than poverty is illness. And worse than illness of the body is illness of the heart.'

3. A journey

In Islamic literature, spirituality is also described as a journey. We should think of ourselves as wayfarers. We have all embarked on a journey away from God and then we are going back to Him. We have all been created by God and this creation is a sort of separation from our origin. However, God has given us the chance to return to Him. The Qur'an says: 'Truly we belong to God and to Him we will return'. (2:156) Our destination is clear. But in order to reach our destination we must be very careful about our direction. If we are on the right path, we will certainly reach our destination. However, if we are on the wrong path, we will not reach our

destination and may even go farther and farther away from it. Of course, in the end all human beings will meet God. The Glorious Qur'an says:

> 'O man, you are trying hard to reach your Lord and you will finally meet Him.' (84:6)

So it may seem that there is nothing to worry about because we have all come from a good place and there is a good destination ahead. But our status when we meet God is of utmost importance. There are two ways of reaching God: to reach Him while He is happy with us or to reach Him while He is angry with us. Human beings are among the very few creatures whose levels of perfection are not fixed, that is, they have been given the capacity to upgrade or degrade themselves.

Thus, the spiritual journey consists of trying to increase our closeness and proximity to God. It should be noted that God is always with us, but we are not necessarily with Him. There is no mention in the Glorious Qur'an of us being with God, but there are many verses which indicate that God is with us. So we are not with God by default or nature, but we can reach a position in which we can get closer and closer to God and, as suggested by the Glorious Qur'an, 'meet' Him. Mystics normally speak of the possibility of losing our own selfhood, limits and boundaries and then becoming identified with God. I am not commenting on this concept here, but in any case it seems obvious that we can get closer and closer to God and this is what we mean by returning to God.

There are numerous detailed accounts of different stations or stages of this journey, such as *Awsaf al-Ashraf* by Nasir al-Din Tusi and *Manazil al-Sa'irin* by 'Abdullah Ansari. Without going into details, in what follows I will try to present a break down of the whole process of self-purification.

A GLANCE AT THE PROCESS OF SELF-PURIFICATION

It seems that the whole process of self-purification can be summed up as follows:

1. Wakefulness or attention to one's self

The very first stage is wakefulness *(yaqzah)*. Many scholars like Imam Khomeini in his book, *Jihad-i Akhbar* ('The Major Jihad'), which is a

compilation of lectures given by him to the seminarians, state that the first stage of self-purification is wakefulness. Indeed some mystics believe that this is only a preliminary stage and that the first stage comes after wakefulness. However, there is no doubt that this is the beginning. The departure point is to become awake. We may say that we are all 'awake', but this is a different kind of wakefulness. According to a well-known *hadith*, the Prophet Mohammad said: 'the people are asleep and only wake when they die.'[5] When they die, they wake and never go to sleep again. But then it is too late.

In some sources, there is a beautiful analogy regarding our situation. Life in this world is compared to a rope for a person who has gone into a deep well and is only holding onto that rope. If he loses this rope he will be finished. Then there are two mice, one white and one black, at the top of the well, gnawing on the rope. The time will come when the rope will definitely break. The mice are very determined and will not go away. This is our situation. The rope represents our life. The white mouse represents day and the black mouse represents night. Day and night are constantly 'gnawing' away at our life and sooner or later we will 'fall' and die.

2. Knowing one's self

After becoming awake, we should try to know ourselves better and find out what resources, opportunities and options are available to us. This is what is called 'self-knowledge' (*ma'rifat al-nafs*).[6] Self-knowledge is the key to the knowledge of God and is considered to be 'the most beneficial knowledge'.[7] So, we need to know ourselves properly. We often underestimate the potentiality that we have for perfection. There is an endless possibility for perfection before us. Also we should never be satisfied as so many of us are too easily satisfied. We need to be more determined and have greater expectations. If we are satisfied with small things, then we will lose out and maybe we will not even achieve those small things.

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5 *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 4, p. 42; Vol. 50, p. 34; Vol. 58, p. 12.

6 For further discussion on self-knowledge, see M A Shomali, *Self-knowledge*, 2nd edition, Jami'at al-Zahra, Qum, 2005.

7 For example, see M Rey Shahri, *Mizan al-Hikamh*, *hadith* no. 11903.

3. Taking care of one's self

After wakefulness and self-knowledge, we need self-care. It is not enough simply to know things; knowledge should serve us by being put into practice. For example, if you know that smoking kills but have no concern for your health and so continue to smoke, there is no benefit in that knowledge. In fact it just makes you more responsible because you know. Of course, this does not mean that we should avoid learning. To say we did not know is not a good enough excuse; we must learn and then put what we learn into practice. So we need to have self-care.

However, there is something that often happens to people in this state. When they become conscious and sensitive to spiritual issues, then unfortunately instead of being concerned with their own piety, instead of being mostly busy with their own problems, they become judgmental about other people. There is a story in the *Mathnawi* by Rumi that four people had an appointment with a king immediately after midday prayers. They were very concerned not to lose this opportunity to meet the king and did not want to be late. So they decided to say their prayers quickly and then go to meet the king. They were religious people who used to go to the mosque to say their prayers there but even so we will see how they would still face some problems. So, when they went to the mosque they started praying. However while they were saying their prayers, the one who calls for prayer *(mu'azzin)* came into the mosque to climb the minaret. They were now unsure and began to wonder whether they had started their prayers too early or whether that day the *mu'azzin* had arrived late. So, whilst praying, one of them asked the *mu'azzin* whether the time for prayers had already arrived or not. The second person asked the first why he had spoken whilst praying because whether the time had arrived or not he had now made his prayers void by speaking. The third person pointed out that the second person had now also spoken by asking the first one why he had spoken. However the fourth person was 'very clever'. He said: 'Thanks to God that I did not speak!'

So, we should have self-care. But how should we care for ourselves? Should we only pray and recite the Qur'an? Should we just serve society by doing community work?

3.a. Acquiring appropriate beliefs and faith

The very first thing that we need to do is to acquire proper beliefs and a proper understanding of the world. For example if you want to be a good businessman you must know the market and the people who are in the same business. You need to know the present situation, future possibilities and the factors that work in that particular business. If we want to be successful in this world we must know Who is the One who has control here. If we need to get permission to start a business we should know where to go to get that permission. In the same way, if we want to start a spiritual 'business' we should know from where to get permission. We should know what laws and regulations apply and should be observed. We should know what provisions are provided and what kind of loans and grants might be given to us.

Sa'di, a famous Iranian poet who wrote the *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, tells a beautiful story. He says that once a person went to do some business in another country. He realized that in that country the bell which they used to hang in the public bath-houses was very cheap to buy. For example, if the bell would have cost £100 in his country then in that country it cost only £1. So he sold all his goods and with whatever money he had, he purchased maybe a thousand bells. Then he expected to return to his country and generate £99 profit on each bell. So he transported all these bells back to his home town. However the problem was that there were only two or three bath-houses in his town and so no-one wanted to buy the bells. No-one was interested, even when he offered them at half price. So he lost all his capital and became bankrupt because he did not know the right kind of goods that would be purchased.

Many people act like this and invest in things in this world which will be of no value in the hereafter. We invest our life, which is the most valuable 'capital' that we have been given, in things which, when we arrive in the hereafter, we will be told were pointless and have wasted this 'capital'. So we need to have faith and to know the way in which our life in this world can secure our happiness in the next world. We must have correct beliefs and we should be especially careful to understand the connection between our life in this world and our life in the hereafter. About one third of the Glorious Qur'an talks about the hereafter. There is so much emphasis on it to teach us that the eternal life is the thing for which we must really prepare ourselves.

So, first we should have correct beliefs, but not the kind of beliefs that one learns and can only repeat in a parrot-like fashion. It must be that kind of belief that we have completely absorbed into our very being so that if we say that there is only One God, then our whole body and soul would declare that we are monotheist.

3.b. Performing acts of piety and refraining from sins and evil deeds

We should try to perform our obligations and observe all the requirements of our faith. Even if we have proper beliefs and perform all our obligations but do not stop committing sins, we will not succeed. If someone washes his hands ten times a day but continues to touch things which are dirty and polluted, his hands will become dirty again. It is no use saying that he washed his hands ten times that day. Daily prayer is like a spiritual bath which makes us clean but if we do the same things again after it then we are just making ourselves dirty again.

There is a beautiful example of someone who has a carrier bag into which he puts some purchases in order to take them home. But there is a big hole in the bottom of the carrier bag and so whatever he puts into the bag falls out through the hole. He is surprised and wonders how could it be possible that he has filled the bag with at least ten times its capacity but it still remains empty. He wonders where everything is going. In a similar way, depending on our age, we have worshipped God for 10, 20, 30 or 40 years. But where is the result of this worship? Why are we still the same kind of people? It is because we do good things but in addition to this we also do bad things.

There is another useful example related by Rumi. There was a farmer who used to harvest his wheat and put it into his storeroom, hoping to fill it for the winter. But, to his astonishment, every time he went to the storeroom to fill it with more wheat he discovered that the level of the wheat would be lower than before and thus the storeroom was never filled. So he was surprised, especially as the storeroom was always locked so that no-one else had access to it to take anything out. He would always carefully lock the door. So he decided that one night he must stay awake inside his storeroom so that he could find out what was happening. So one night he indeed remained awake inside the storeroom, silently watching. After midnight he realized that there were some huge rats coming and

taking all the wheat out of the storeroom. Thus he realized that they were the real cause of the problem. So Rumi tells us that we are like this. There are some rats in our hearts which take away the light of our good deeds. If there are no rats, then where is the light of forty years of praying, the light of forty years of fasting, of going for Hajj etc? So we should be very careful not to do any sinful actions. We should not commit even one single sin. Of course we are human beings and we may make mistakes, but a real believer is the one who, if he makes a mistake, firstly always feels sad and bitter about it and secondly he quickly repents and sincerely decides not to repeat the same mistake again. So, if we commit a sin we must repent as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, amongst some people who are interested in spirituality there are those who think that the religious law *(shari'a)* is only needed at the beginning and that afterwards we should be concerned with the requirements of the spiritual journey *(tariqah)*. Sometimes they say that this is like someone who has reached the core and so no longer needs the peel. But this is a wrong idea because we always need to observe the *shari'a*. The Holy Prophet and Imams of the Household of the Prophet always followed the *shari'a* and there is no-one who can claim to be more pious than them. There is no incident where the Holy Prophet committed a sin and then said that it was alright for him to do so. For example he never said that we should not tell lies but that for him to do so was allowed. Or that we should not drink alcohol or gamble but that for him it was acceptable. Unfortunately nowadays we find that there are some who follow people calling themselves masters or imams who do not themselves follow the requirements of piety but whose followers believe will never be affected by this.

However, according to the school of Ahl al Bayt this matter is very clear. We should observe the *shari'a* but this is not enough. So there are two different ways of looking at *shari'a*. One is to believe that the *shari'a* is only for the beginners and that after we reach the higher levels we no longer need it. This is what some Sufis do. The second way is to say that the *shari'a* is always needed but that by only following *shari'a* we will not achieve higher levels of perfection. If we want to go to the higher levels, in addition to the *shari'a* we should try to go beyond the performance of mere rituals to discover the spirit contained within them. An example which might help is that of a person who is at primary school. If someone is at primary school and they feel satisfied with that, then their education will always remain incomplete. They need

to go on to secondary school, to high school and then to university. But we cannot say that we will go to secondary school and once there we will forget about everything learnt at primary school. Or that when we go to university we will forget about everything learnt at high school. This will not work.

3.c. Acquiring good characteristics and removing bad ones

In addition to having proper beliefs and performing our obligations and refraining from sins, we need to look into the qualities of our heart or spirit and find out what good qualities we lack so that we achieve them and what bad qualities we have so that we can remove them. This is what we normally learn in the science of *akhlaq* (morality) and is much more difficult than having proper beliefs or proper practice. We often have bad habits which are difficult to change because they have almost become part of us. In this situation we need to struggle and we need cure. For example a person may be fearful. As soon as it gets dark, they become frightened. Sometimes the person may be very determined to overcome this fear but it is still very difficult and needs some kind of treatment. Somehow it is like a cancer which needs difficult therapy. Firstly we must identify our bad habits and then we should try to promise ourselves that we will not do anything according to that habit because if we act according to a bad habit it becomes stronger and stronger. For example we may have a bad habit which we cannot remove immediately, but if we do not actually act according to that habit then gradually it becomes weaker and weaker. There are also specific solutions for particular bad habits depending on what kind of habit they are. So the general advice and solution is not to act according to a bad habit but there are also specific solutions for certain bad habits.

In works such as *Mi'raj al-Sa'adah* and *Jami' al-Sa'adah* we learn different faculties of our soul and the corresponding virtues and vices of each. We also learn the methods for obtaining the virtues and removing the vices.

3.d. Continuing the process of self-purification until one becomes a true servant who meets his Lord

We should then continue this process. It is a lifelong challenge which cannot be given a time limit of one month or one year or ten years after

which time we could feel that we have completed it and allow ourselves to relax. On the contrary, as long as we remain in this world, up to the very last moment of our life, we must be careful. And we must not waste any opportunity. There is no age of retirement because however much we manage to acquire, it is still never enough and we always need more.

There is an interesting story illustrating our situation. There was a group of people who were going to be sent to a dark tunnel. They were told that when they entered the tunnel it would be very dark and they would not be able to see anything. They were also told that they must go from one end of this tunnel to the other end and that on the floor there would be some stones which they could pick up and bring out. They were told that if they took the stones they would regret it, but that they would also regret it if they did not take the stones! Then they were sent into the tunnel. Some people thought that it was not worth collecting the stones because they would regret doing so. Some others thought, out of curiosity, that they should take some stones to see what they were, even if they might regret it later. Thus, some collected stones whilst others did not and then they all came out of the corridor. When they were outside again, in daylight, those people who had collected stones realised that they were actually very expensive jewels. Those people who had not taken any stones saw this and became very angry. They started to protest, asking why they had been told that they would regret collecting the stones. Then they were told that although those people who do not collect any stones regret this, however, even those who did take some regret that they had not taken more and wished that they had collected more by filling their pockets as well.

Practical instructions

We have already discussed some general principles, such as observing the *shari'a* and taking care of our qualities and characteristics. However, there are also certain practices which can strengthen us, increase our will-power and which can make us courageous and determined enough to continue this journey. These should then keep us on the right track. In what follows, we refer to five instructions given by Muslim mystics which are indeed rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

1. Not to speak unless necessary

We should try not to speak too much. People may think that this is not very important but in fact it is very important indeed. We should try to speak only as much as it is necessary. Even if it is not prohibited to talk about something but it is not useful to mention it, then do not speak about it. Our words and what we say have a great effect on our hearts because they make us pre-occupied. It is like when someone eats too much and then has pain in their stomach because they cannot digest their food properly. Our heart becomes ill from saying things which are unnecessary. We should take this very seriously as it is of utmost importance. If we can say something in five sentences rather than ten, then we should do this. If we were about to say something and then we realise that it is not necessary to say it, then it is better not to speak.

People may say that they have to sit with their parents, family or friends and that they must be sociable. In these circumstances we should of course say something but we must watch carefully what we do say and speak for the sake of God. We can say to God that we are speaking in order to make our family or friends happy. 'To bring joy to the heart of a believer' is an act of worship. However, there is a huge difference between someone who says something to make others happy and a person who makes a mockery of others or who just wants to amuse themselves by saying too much.

So, we should watch our words carefully. There is a very interesting *hadith* from the Holy Prophet which says that he told a group of his companions:

> 'If it were not because of speaking too much and because of those bad thoughts which come to your heart, you would have been able to see what I see and hear what I hear.'[8]

It can be both easy and difficult not to speak. It can be easy because there is nothing to learn, there is nothing we have to buy and no special place is needed. We are not required to do any thing. We are just told not to speak too much. So it seems that is not difficult. But if we try, we will find that it is indeed very difficult. Sometimes we may feel as if we are going to explode because we want so much to say something.

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8 *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, Vol. 5, p. 292.

But if we practice, it becomes easier. According to Islamic *hadiths*, silence can be an act or worship to the extent that Imam Ali is quoted as saying, 'There is no worship like silence.' Imam Sadiq is also quoted as saying, 'God is not worshipped by anything like silence *(samt)* and walking to His House'.[9]

2. Not to eat more than is needed

When we eat too much, even if our food meets all religious requirements, it makes our spirit lazy. We will not be able to pay attention. In other words what we eat is food for our body, but fasting is food for our soul. However, there is a dilemma here because we need to feed both our body and our soul as they both need food and we must give each of them their due rights. What should we do? We should eat only as much as is needed and then we are giving food to both our body and soul. Fasting is very important and useful, if we can do it. But even if we do not fast we can achieve a great deal by simply reducing the amount of food we eat, even by a small amount. There is a beautiful poem in Farsi that can be translated as follows:

> 'Keep your stomach empty of food and then there will be room
> for the light of knowledge to come in.'

3. Not to sleep too much

This is especially important so that we do not waste our time and lose the golden opportunity of performing night prayers. Excessive comfort of the body is poisonous for the spirit. We need just the right amount of food and rest in order to have a healthy body because our body must be healthy to serve us. But more than is necessary will be harmful for both our body and our spirit. God has created our body in such a way that if we look after our body at the same time we can look after our spirit. We do not need to damage our body to become a pious person. If we eat too much we damage both our body and our spirit. If we sleep too much,

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9 *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 5, Chapter 4, p. 200, *hadith* no. 6327; Vol. 11, Chapter 32, p. 79, *hadith* no. 14289.

do not take exercise and follow an inactive life-style, we will damage our body and our spirit. So it is very important not to sleep too much. In the Glorious Qur'an, God praises believers by saying:

> 'They sleep only a small portion of the night. And before dawn, they ask forgiveness from God.'(51:17 and 18)

There are some people who do not sleep very much but the problem is that they do not know when it is the correct time to sleep. So they sleep at the time of the day which is best for worship and they are awake during the time which is least beneficial. For example, sometimes we sleep very late, after midnight, around 2 or 3am and then at the best time of the day for worship and contemplation we are unconscious. So the part of the day which is most important is the time before dawn and after dawn till sun rises.

4. To have private time in which we can be alone and reflect

We need some time to be alone, either during the day or more probably at night. It is good to promise ourselves that for ten or fifteen minutes every day we will just sit alone, for example on our prayer mat or in the garden, and think. But about what?

We should think about the things that we have done, about the things that we were supposed to do but did not and about the condition of our soul. We should decide if we are making any progress or not. If we have done something right then we should thank God for that. If we have done something wrong then we should try to remedy it. If we are not strong enough then we should impose some penalty on ourselves.

The only time that we can think about and plan these kinds of things is when we have some private time. If we are always busy we cannot think about such things. But if we spend fifteen or twenty minutes alone with ourselves then we can achieve all these things. It is hard to know why people are afraid of being alone with themselves. We can often notice this. We love ourselves so much but the most painful thing for us is to be left to ourselves. If we are put in a room and locked in for 24 hours to be alone with ourselves, even if we are told that we will have food and all other necessities but just that we will be all alone, we will ask why we are being confined, imprisoned and tortured. But what is wrong with this?

We have not been shut in with a wild animal or a criminal. We have only been asked to be alone with ourselves. Why do we not want to be alone with ourselves? There must be some unhealthy issue behind this. Imam 'Ali b. Husayn al-Sajjad says:

> 'If all the people from the East to the West die I will not feel lonely as long as the Qur'an is with me.'[10]

But most people are so afraid of being alone that they constantly make themselves busy. And if no one else is around, they will switch on the television or mp3 player or radio to make some noise so that they feel that they are not alone. But this is very bad. Sometimes we must try to be alone, have some privacy, have some rest and relaxation and think about the things that are very important.

5. Constant remembrance of God

Again this is both difficult and not difficult to do. It is not difficult because it does not cost us anything, we do not need to pay for it or go to a special place or do any physical exercise. So it should be very easy, as are all the other practices mentioned above, none of which costs us anything and so they are very cost effective methods when we consider the results which they can produce. However, it is also very difficult to do because our soul always tries to indulge itself, to do what it wants and does not want to be disciplined. But if we discipline our soul then things become easy.

Remembrance of God is healing. The Names of God are medicine and if we take this medicine in order to remember God then we will be healed, but if we constantly repeat invocations like *'Allahu Akbar'* again and again but do not remember God then we are just keeping our mouths busy with repetitions and this is not proper remembrance of God. If we use the Names of God to remember Him then this is the healing. It is very easy to do this. For example, we can be driving or walking or doing whatever we have to do and still be remembering God. The Qur'an speaks of the people who do not forget God even when they are involved in business and commerce. They always remember God. We may be cooking or washing, teaching or studying, but at the same time we must remember

10 *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2, p. 602.

God. So we need to remember God and these invocations are means to help us to keep our concentration. All the different *dhikrs* (like *Allahu Akbar, Alhamdullillah* and *Subhanallah*) are medicines, but we must take these medicines correctly by remembering God, by trying to get close to that Attribute of God which we are mentioning and then we will find that we are closer to God.

So this is the way in which we should remember God and if we taste the sweetness and beauty of true remembrance of God then we will never be pleased with anything else. We need to rid ourselves of all the bad things inside us and then we will start to really enjoy remembrance of God.

If we spend some private time alone then we can start to learn how to remember God during that private time and then extend this to the rest of our lives. In the beginning we may only remember God when we are on our prayer mat. But gradually we can try to remember God throughout the day. And then remembrance of God becomes constant.

So these are five important things that need to be observed:

1. Not to speak too much.
2. Not to eat too much.
3. Not to sleep too much.
4. Not to mix with people too much or be too busy.
5. Not to forget God.

These are five very easy things to do which do not cost anything. They are five powerful vitamins for our spiritual health and growth. If someone maintains them for several weeks he will certainly start feeling the difference and will see the results.